

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/36607>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

Outside the Doll's House :

A Study in Images of Women in English and French Theatre

1848 - 1914

by

Elaine Aston

Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the

Graduate School of Comparative Literature

at the

University of Warwick

March 1987

Summary

The aim of the thesis is to document images of women in English and French theatre, between 1848 and 1914, which challenged the stereotypical image of women as passive wives and mothers in the 'doll's house'.

The methodologies employed are not restricted to dramatic criticism, but draw upon a wider net of feminism, semiotics, and social history, in order to place the plays, roles and actresses in the theatre of their time. As a comparative study, it documents interchange, interaction and difference, between the theatre of England and France.

The images are divided into three groups, viz., the 'female outcast', the 'third sex' and 'revolting women'. Section one documents a range of femme fatale images, including the courtisane; the Magdalen; Cleopatra, the royal seducer; Medea, the outcast queen, and the dangerous women of melodrama.

The second section begins with studies of the male impersonators of music hall, notably Vesta Tilley, and the principal boys of Victorian and Edwardian pantomime. Male impersonation on the 'serious' stage is then considered, in a study of actresses in the cross-dressing role of Shakespeare's Rosalind, and Bernhardt's travesti roles, in particular her Hamlet.

The third section considers the révoltée of the social drama, and debate surrounding the rationale of motherhood, and the hostile reactions to the issues of abortion and infanticide. A chapter on Manchester's Gaiety theatre indicates the importance of the 'new theatres' in providing a wider and more realistic, representation of women, while the final study examines drama which portrayed the difficulties for women trying to survive independently of men, indicating the economic disadvantages and prejudices which drove many women into prostitution.

Overall, the three groups of images represent three strategies for power and their success and failure is indicated and assessed. The capacity of theatre for social debate is highlighted, and the contribution of women in the creation of radical images is re-evaluated, thereby making a significant contribution to women's studies and to nineteenth century theatre studies.

Contents

	Page
<u>Introduction : The Image of the Actress</u>	1
 <u>Section One : The Female Outcast : Seducer and Seduced</u>	
1. The <u>Courtisane</u>	12
2. The Saintly Sinner	46
3. The Outcast Queen and Royal Seducer : Medea and Cleopatra	77
4. Melodrama's Dangerous Women	112
 <u>Section Two : The 'Third Sex'</u>	
5. The Male Impersonator of Music Hall : Vesta Tilley	124
6. Pantomime's Principal Boys	147
7. Cross-dressing in the Forest of Arden	166
8. Princess of Denmark	184
 <u>Section Three : 'Revolting Women'</u>	
9. <u>La Révoltée</u>	203
10. Motherhood : Refuge or Refusal?	239
11. The 'New Woman' at Manchester	270
12. Outside the Doll's House : A Woman's 'Profession'	289
 <u>Conclusion : Retrospect and Prospect</u>	 318
 <u>Bibliography</u>	 323

List of Illustrations

	Following Page
Duse and Bernhardt : <u>La dame aux camélias</u>	19
Réjane's 'irregular beauty'	30
English and Continental views on the 'art of gesture'	37
Ada Cavendish as Mercy Merrick	56
<u>The Profligate</u> , illustration from the <u>Theatre</u>	58
Mrs Patrick Campbell as Paula Tanqueray	62
Beardsley's portrait of Mrs Patrick Campbell	63
<u>Votes for Women</u> : The Trafalgar Square Rally Scene	69
Ristori's 'transport of maternal affection'	83
Bernhardt's Médée, illustration from <u>Le Théâtre</u>	91
Bernhardt as Phèdre	92
Bernhardt in Sardou's <u>Cléopâtre</u>	96
Bernhardt in Sardou's <u>Cléopâtre</u> , The Death Scene	99
Duse's Cleopatra	101
Constance Collier in the 'messenger scene', from the <u>Play Pictorial</u>	106
Walter Melville's 'Drama Factory'	114
Scenes from <u>The Bad Girl of the Family</u>	120
'Algy, the Piccadilly Johnny with the little glass eye'	134
Peggy Woffington as the 'Female Volunteer'	136
'Jolly good luck to the girl who loves a soldier'	137
Tilley's 'Midnight Son' and Julie Andrews in <u>Victor/Victoria</u>	139
Sketch of the Peter Pan costume	151
Two 'adult' principal boys: Florie Ford and Harriet Vernon	153
Marie Lloyd in <u>Humpty Dumpty</u> and <u>Robinson Crusoe</u>	154
Nelly Power and Vesta Tilley in <u>Sinbad</u>	158
Fanny Leslie's Robinson Crusoe	159
Principal boys : Ada Blanche, Hetty King, Alexandra Dagmar & Queenie Leighton	160

Illustrations Continued

	Following Page
Sketches from the 1896 <u>As You Like It</u>	172
Mrs Langtry's 'nether limbs'	174
Ada Rehan's Rosalind	175
Lily Brayton as Rosalind	176
The Amazons	177
<u>Le passant</u>	186
The Hamlets of Sarah Bernhardt and Alice Marriott	189
Sketch of Bernhardt's Hamlet and portrait of the young Raphael	192
L'Aiglon	194
Pelléas and Mélisande	197
<u>Pelléas et Mélisande</u> , Act III	198
Julia Bartet, on the cover of <u>Le Théâtre</u> , 1920	209
Marthe Brandès	211
Julia Bartet, 'La Divine'	214
Réjane	223
Cora Laparcerie, on the cover of <u>Le Théâtre</u> , January 1910	229
Berthe Bady on the cover of <u>Le Théâtre</u> , April 1910	246
Suzanne Desprès, <u>Les remplaçantes</u>	257
Miss Horniman	270
Mona Limerick and Hilda Bruce Potter	274
<u>Hindle Wakes</u> , Act III	283
Jeanne Provost as Thérèse	293
Mrs Pat as Theodosia	298
Lillah McCarthy in <u>The Twelve-Pound Look</u>	301
Suzanne Desprès and the trial scene from <u>La fille Elisa</u>	305
Fanny Brough as Mrs Warren and Madge McIntosh as Vivie	309
Mlle Mancini and Mlle Mylo d'Arcyelle, in <u>Prostituée</u>	310

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank family, friends and colleagues for their support during my research. In particular, I would like to thank Dr Susan Bassnett-McGuire for providing the impetus and direction for the study, and Dr John Stokes for his tireless reading of drafts and continued support. Thanks to the University of Warwick Library, especially to Sue Wallington and Peter Larkin; to the City Libraries of Manchester and Birmingham, and to the British Museum and Fawcett Libraries. Also, special thanks to my companion, Peter, for his patient support and encouragement.

This thesis is dedicated to Geof, in memory.

Introduction : The Image of the Actress

The idea of undertaking this comparative study in images of women, had its genesis in a preliminary reading of the drama of the 1890's and in particular theatre's contribution towards social change. When reading around the subject area, I discovered that most of the studies contemporaneous with this period of theatre history were out of date, inadequate, if not inaccurate surveys, that brought none of the incisive, modern, critical weapons to bear on the subject matter. In addition, there were no detailed studies of the contribution actresses actually made to the changing image of women. In fact, there were few studies, outside the biographies and dubious autobiographies (glamorous fictions rather than truths) which analysed the position of the actress. Though there were several studies already published on the 'new woman' in nineteenth century fiction and a publishing house with an editorial policy aimed at rediscovering lost women writers of the last century and onwards, the female role in theatre, with the exception of a few areas, such as Ibsen's 'new women', had been largely ignored. The contribution that the nineteenth-century actress made to the changing image of women, had remained undocumented.

After a period of eclectic reading, and information gathering on the nineteenth century theatre, its actresses, their roles and the impact on their audiences, and so forth, three areas of image-breaking began to emerge, which finally materialized into the means of structuring research. The three groups of images which form the three sections of this thesis are, the femme fatale, whose outcast status threatened the sanctity of marriage and family life; the women in male guises who swapped their feminine petticoats for the trousers of patriarchal authority, and the 'revolting women' who tried to make lives of their own by rejecting the stultifying confines of domesticity. In terms of the study, the images are structurally separate, though in fact, the images operated simultaneously in an extremely varied and rich chapter of theatre history.

Whilst early surveys of this theatre history, written during the period or

shortly afterwards, are anecdotal rather than analytical, modern critical theories and criticisms have provided more complex methodologies and vocabularies of analysis. Looking at images is now accepted as a widely used and basic tool of feminist literary theory. 'Seeing' how images of women are constructed is the first stage in understanding, and rejecting images of female powerlessness, and seeking radical alternatives.

These three images are, after a crude fashion, strategies for power. In the first, women use their own sexualities as a means of survival and of acquiring wealth. It is the crudest of the three strategies because it necessitates the bartering of beauty; a woman's body exchanged for economic gain. The second is an instance of power reversal. Dressing like men entails emulation of male speech and dress; experiencing the power of the 'dominant' sex over the 'weak'. Rejection of existing marriage laws and rules of motherhood, is the most advanced strategy of the three. It refuses a woman's place in the world as it is, and as a moment of negation, is a preliminary movement towards the expression of 'female desire'.

Studying images has not been the sole prerogative of feminist literary theories. The methodology of examining the parts which construct the whole, whether a painting, poem, or prose text, is the basis of structuralist and semiotic theories. For the theatre semiotician this has meant a refreshing break with traditional, textual approaches to dramatic criticism, and a move towards analysing a performance context; of understanding drama as theatre. Thinking in theatrical sign-systems, has undermined the authority of the dramatic text, and encouraged an analysis of productions which takes account of all systems of staging - the lighting, the props, the costumes, the performers and so on.

Studying the images of women in nineteenth century theatre, has therefore involved a combination of these methodologies and criticisms. The sphere of interest is determined by those images which are offering radical alternatives to the female 'norm' and thinking in terms of theatre as theatre, and not dramatic literature, means that they are not seen as literary constructs, but as the products of a performance context. What is offered, is not dramatic criticism, but an

attempted reconstruction of the images, in terms of their interpreters and relevance to the theatre and society of their time, which ultimately means being a critic, semiotician, feminist, and social historian, rolled into one.

It also involves the role of comparative literary theorist, because the study sets out to document theatre across national boundaries, in an attempt, by contrast and comparison, to highlight the differences, influences and affinities, between the theatre of the two countries, which might otherwise be missed in the studies of the literature of a single nationality. Actresses in the nineteenth century were not tied to national boundaries, and were engaged on European and international tours, which opened up channels of cultural exchange and influenced the theatrical canons of countries other than their own.

The focusing on the stages of Paris and London was determined by the centrality of these two leading European stages to the history of the nineteenth century. Much of the dramatic traffic was in fact travelling one way, from France to England, and the majority of reception studies contained in the thesis, are based on the French actresses who appeared in London seasons, and subsequently influenced English dramatists, critics and audiences. Translations, adaptations, and foreign drama columns, are other key comparative channels examined in explorations of theatrical, cultural and social difference.

When tracing a particular image, it may be that it belongs wholly to one country and it therefore becomes necessary to establish why; whether the reasons are perhaps, social, political, or theatrical. It is for this reason that some chapters concentrate more heavily on the developments of the stage of one particular nation while others examine interactions between the two, depending upon where a particular image has taken root. Whether chapters are tracing images of women peculiar to the French stage or to the English, or to both, overall, the crossing of national boundaries is designed to provide a fuller and mutually ^{more} illuminating picture of women in theatre, than might be achieved by studying just the English, or just the French stage.

Because of the range and scope of the project, it was necessary when illustrating a particular image, to limit the number of productions and performances cited,

and where selection of texts or other discriminative criteria have been employed, explanations are given in the relevant chapters. Particular problems in accumulating secondary source material (notably on the French side) were encountered in certain areas, though every attempt at a reasonable and even documentation was made, and details of major, secondary, journalistic and critical sources are given in the bibliography.

More notably problematical was fixing the dates of the study. As the start of the First World War, 1914 provided an obvious cut-off point, for theatre would never be the same again and its progression over the final decades of the old century and the first decade of the new, came to an abrupt halt. Deciding where to begin was much harder, for whereas the main areas of interest were the 1880's, 1890's and early 1900's, analysing the images meant going much further back into the century to make sense of their origins and development. So whilst the study is essentially concerned to demonstrate the late nineteenth century and turn of the century images, it traces images as far back as 1848, with the earliest detailed production reference given as Augier's L'aventurière. It was a year which in history marked a period of international unrest and revolution, and in terms of theatrical history, in France, marked the start of dramatic representation and debate on the value of the nuclear family, and the sanctity of the mother and wife, which over the ensuing decades was to be hotly defended and contested on both the English and French stages.

Since^I embarked on this project the political theatre of the English suffragettes has received renewed interest, but the enormous contribution made by the nineteenth century actresses in general, who helped to break, whether by design or accident, the conservative image of women, has remained largely ignored. This is therefore an attempt to redress the balance and offer a wide-ranging study of women's work in theatre and its contribution to the image-breaking process.

The Image of the Actress

Being an actress was, in its own way, a challenge to the stereotypical 'angel in the house'. To the woman, who by virtue of her profession, broke with society's

image of the domestic female, were attached all sorts of disreputable connotations and throughout the last century, regardless of realities, the words 'actress' and 'prostitute' were almost interchangeable. By virtue of hard-earned fame, an actress might place herself above public censure, as in the case of Ellen Terry, or alternatively glory in her reputation of eccentric and outlandish behaviour, as Bernhardt did. Regardless of whether a 'reputation' was merited or not, the fact remains that ideological forces contributed to such an image and sought to keep the actress from crossing respectable thresholds.

The nineteenth century actress had inherited a legacy from her predecessors, which reinforced the image of the actress as beautiful siren whose charms would win the hearts of rich suitors. The attraction had little to do with admiration of talent and everything to do with beauty. 'I have looked through the annals of the stage carefully', writes a Cosmopolitan reviewer, 'and have failed to discover that any noble patron of the drama married an actress on account of her art, her intellect, or her genius, what these noble patrons were peculiarly susceptible to was physical beauty'.¹ Such celebrated beauty which, in the history of women on the stage had won the hearts of royal suitors, found renewed connotative strength in the late nineteenth-century with the advent of music halls, which gave greater scope for the 'titled beauty hunter'.² Whereas beauty might have helped in the renewal of the aristocratic race, it did little to promote talent within a profession which had no formal training for aspiring newcomers, and had come to rely wholly on physical attraction. As Shaw stated,

Most of the routine of our leading theatrical work in London is done by ladies who are not altogether artists and not altogether exhibitions, but who eke out a little art with more or less personal attractiveness. Probably the reason our managers prefer the brain-less susceptible woman is that she is a ready-made actress as far as she can act at all; and small blame to them, since we have no apprenticeship system to secure to a manager the service of an actress whom he trains, and no system of training to replace the apprenticeship system.³

The emphasis on beauty was equally marked on the nineteenth century Parisian stage. At the turn of the century an article in the Cosmopolitan comments on the evolution of the French theatre's 'penchant for beautiful women' assigning

the reasons for the proliferation of such beauties to the 'courtly descent' of French theatre.⁴ More pertinent to the position of the actress on the nineteenth century Parisian stage, is the link between courtisane and actress, particularly during the Second Empire. Many women launched successful careers in the profession of love via the medium of theatre, or alternatively used their rich protectors to publicly promote their beauty on stage, in either case eradicating the distinction between courtisane and actress. The attitude of the theatre owner, who at the beginning of Emile Zola's Nana, insists on referring to his theatre as a brothel, typifies the way in which the stage had rapidly become a showcase for female beauty. In short, the actress was a personification of the demi-monde; the illicit sex goddess of a repressed bourgeois society, which publicly condemned the 'transgressors' of its morality, whilst privately celebrating the object of their sexual fantasies.

Inevitably the emphasis on a woman's beauty, also inspired the additional role of society fashion model. The actress was a potential trend setter in fashions, particularly as most commercial theatre put on plays with contemporary settings, requiring modern dress. Such performances were subsequently described and photographed in women's magazines and theatre journals, the actress's image becoming a means to advertise and sell a product.

Very little of an actress's life in the period could be said to be private. The details of her off-stage romances whether recorded by an enthusiastic press or by the actress herself, made entertaining reading and contributed to the star image. The publicity machine encouraged an image of stardom and fame, and used all possible means to achieve this aim, whether based on accurate appraisal of genius and talent, or the furthering of notoriety on the basis of licentious society gossip. In its turn, the glamorous star image concealed the harsh economic realities of the profession. Given that the limelight was dedicated entirely to leading ladies, no attention was paid to the plight of the poorly paid chorus girls, ballet-dancers, or the aging actresses⁵ all of whom might well be driven into prostitution out of economic necessity. Even those actresses who finally achieved success were often bankrupt as a result of over greedy managers, mismanagement of funds,

and so on. Several furthermore, recall that it was only economic necessity which drove them to consider the profession in the first instance. ⁶

The image of the actress was further engineered by the arts in general. Frequently, the actress was taken as a model of inspiration for artists and sculptors, and her beauty celebrated in the visual arts. With the advent of photography, began the star 'pin-up' pictures, which haunted all forms of theatre memorabilia. In popular fiction, the actress was depicted as the prodigal daughter returning to the fold of respectability. Actress-novels, such as Geraldine Jewsbury's The Half Sisters (1848) and William Black's In Silk Attire (1869), or the later C.A.E. Ranger Gull's Back to Lilac Land (1901), depict heroines who have to fight through strong social prejudice before they prove themselves virtuous individuals worthy of public approval and respectable marriages. ⁷ Though the details of an actress's life documented in the prose narratives, tend to be swamped by the melodramatic love stories, nevertheless, some of the difficulties of poverty, instability and sexual harassment by the male management, which the débutante faced, reveal grains of truth for the theatre historian. ⁸

In French fiction of the Second Empire and late nineteenth century, studies of the actress and theatrical life were in vogue, as for example, in Edmond Goncourt's La Faustin (1882), though sympathy for the actress was even less forthcoming. Doubtless this was due to the actress-~~courtisane~~ phenomenon. As a threat to the respectable family unit, the professional lover had ultimately to be punished for her disruption of the social order. ⁹ Zola's *Nana* and Paul Alexis's less well known *Lucie Pellegrin*, ¹⁰ both pay the price for the actress-~~courtisane~~ existence, and as a penalty for their parasitic lives, die painfully, ostracized by the society on which they preyed.

In other prose fiction, the profession of the actress is treated 'realistically' as an option for middle class ladies finding themselves in a moment of pecuniary embarrassment. Gwendolen in George Elliot's Daniel Deronda, when entertaining the idea of a stage career, suffered from the popular delusion that being a 'lady' was a sufficient guarantee of theatrical success. ¹¹ Rhoda, in Gissing's Isabel

Clarendon (1886), suffers from the same popular misconception and when her friend Isabel tries to dissuade her from such a project, argues,

"But are you quite sure it is so, Mrs Clarendon?" she urged. "I mean that ladies don't go on to the stage? It used to be so, no doubt, but things have been changing. I'm sure I've heard that both ladies and gentlemen are beginning to take to acting nowadays. ¹²

Isabel de-mystifies the desire 'to become a Bohemian, and live in contempt of us poor subjects of Mrs Grundy', indicating that an actress's life long struggle was to be accepted by respectable society. Such advice was indeed the advice given to several nineteenth-century actresses, whose family and friends abhorred the thought of them going on the stage, ¹³ but a warning that several young ladies, attracted by the bright lights and glamour, tended to ignore.

Another important factor in determining the image of the actress, were the roles undertaken. Not only did the actress bring her own star-personality-image to each production, but also her repertoire of roles was inextricably and connotatively linked to the image. For example, Mrs Patrick Campbell could never shake off the shadow of Paula Tanqueray. As most drama on the popular stage centred around the troubles inspired by an eternal love triangle, an actress inevitably had to undertake the role of the cheat or the cheated. As the number of predatory women on stage increased in the second half of the nineteenth century, feeding upon their male victims, challenging the bourgeois institutions of marriage and family, by means of their sexuality, so the connotations which derived from such an image, were linked to the sign of the actress; both inside and outside the boundaries of theatre.

With regard to roles, there were several in which the actress played her double, the star performing the fictitious role of star and constituting a further source of image-making. ¹⁴ As in the portraits in prose fiction, the image of the actress might be used as part of a study of disenchantment with the profession, or as a dramatic device with a moral purpose. ¹⁵

In spite of hardships it continued to be a growth industry and with the advent

of other forms of popular entertainment, such as the music halls and variety palaces, the number of women within the profession increased rapidly.¹⁶ When in 1902 the Strand Magazine addressed the question 'Would you be an actress',¹⁷ to the leading ladies of the London stage, enquiring as to whether if they had their time again, they would, with hindsight, pursue a stage career, almost to a 'woman', they replied with an enthusiastic 'yes'. In spite of the hazards they enumerated, the accusations of loose living, anti-social hours and hardwork, depleted health and strength, and the miseries of failure, the advantages of having a vocation in life, the chance of economic independence and the opportunity of commanding equal salaries to men, and of achieving public success, outweighed the disadvantages.

Undeterred by 'antitheatrical prejudice', many women opted for a stage career, and what some of them achieved, more especially in terms of breaking the mould, and dramatically representing images of women 'outside the doll's house', is documented in this study.

Notes to Introduction : The Image of the Actress

1. A.C. Wheeler, 'Actresses who have become Peeresses', Cosmopolitan, 20, no.2 (December 1895), 130 -137 (p.136).
2. Ibid. Christopher Kent, 'Image and Reality : The Actress and Society', in A Widening Sphere, edited by Martha Vicinius (London : Methuen, 1980), pp.94 - 116 (p.115), also discusses the coining of the term, 'actressocracy', and its implications for the stage and high society.
 ➔ Like-wise, there was a good deal of comment on the union between the 'profession' and the upper classes in contemporary fiction, as for example, in the amusing portrait of 'actressocracy' in Cynthia's Damages: A story of the Stage, by Reginald Turner (1901); such discussions eventually finding their way into the drama. Consider the following example from A.W. Pinero's The Mind the Paint Girl (London : Heinemann, 1912):
 I maintain it's a grand thing for our English nobs that the slips of sons have taken to marrying young women of the stamp of Maudie Trevail and Gwennie Harker - Lil; keen-witted young women full of the joy of life, with strong frames, beautiful hair and fine eyes, and healthy pink gums and big white teeth. Sneer at the Pandora girls? Great Scot, it's my belief that the Pandora girls 'll be the salvation of the aristocracy in this country in the long run. (pp.20 - 21)
3. Our Theatre in the Nineties, Standard Edition^{3 vols} (London : Constable, 1932 ; reprinted, 1948), II, p.112. All subsequent references will be to this edition.
4. Vance Thompson, 30, no. 3 (January 1901), 238 -247 (p.239)
5. An actress's career was generally much shorter than that of the actor, its duration dependent upon her youth and beauty. Max Beerbohm summarizes

the problems in his article, 'Actresses and Ages', in the Saturday Review, 18 November 1903, 652 - 653 :

Every young actress wants to be a great success, and to earn a great salary. Unless she happens to be also a great genius, her salary will cease to be great after her first youth. With great genius, she will be able to linger on, dictating her own wishes, and playing young parts after she has ceased to be young, at the rate of fifty or more guineas a week. Without that rare gift of genius, she will have no chance of playing parts that do not befit her years. She will have to be content with humdrum middle-aged parts, for which the remuneration is (however unjustly) small; and (according to the present policy of managers) she will not be engaged often even for these. (p.653)

6. For example, in the early chapters of Mrs Campbell's autobiography, My Life and Some Letters (London : Hutchinson, 1922), she records how her career was born out of her fight to bring her husband home from Australia. In spite of the stardom which her performance as Paula Tanqueray eventually brought her, she spent the whole of her acting career fighting against illness and debt.
7. In his wide-ranging study The Antitheatrical Prejudice, Jonas Barish (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London : University of California Press, 1981), gives further examples of 'antitheatrical prejudice' in the fictional treatment of the actress, in his chapter, 'Crosscurrents and Countercurrents' (pp.384 - 399). His examples include Henry James The Tragic Muse (1890) and George Moore's The Mummer's Wife (1885).
8. The Half Sisters, 2 vols (London, Chapman & Hall, 1848), I, includes a realistic picture of an actress's début. Bianca, the heroine, has her first engagement in a dumbshow at 10 shillings a week, with her stage clothes provided. When she joins a regular theatre she earns 18 shillings a week, on condition she play any part demanded of her, and later as a leading actress she receives £2 per week. When times are hard, she earns extra money by copying out playscripts to increase her salary, and is always required, even when relatively successful, to make alterations to her costumes herself.
9. As an example, see Alphonse Lemonnier's Les femmes de théâtre (1865), whose grisette heroine lusts after a stage career, which leads to self-wrought unhappiness and suicide.
France's most prolific nineteenth century documenter of parisiennes, actress-courtesans and the demi-monde was Arsène Houssaye, who amongst his fictional studies of virtue gone astray, also wrote La comédienne (1884), an account of the actress Rachel, in novel form.
10. There is a clear parallel between Zola's novel and Alexis's short story. La fin de Lucie Pellegrin as the title intimates, focuses on the last moments of the actress-courtesan's life, and is a study which equates with Zola's death scene of Nana. Both works appeared at approximately the same time; Zola's Nana began to appear in a serialised form in Le Voltaire, 1879, and Alexis's short story was published in 1880. Given the friendship between the two writers the affinities are not surprising. (Alexis produced a biographical work on his colleague, Emile Zola, notes d'un ami, in 1882.) Both works were subsequently adapted for the theatre. Nana was performed in a five act drama at the Ambigu in January 1879 and Alexis wrote a one act version of his short story, performed at the Théâtre Libre, June 1888.
11. Daniel Deronda (1876), edited by Barbara Hardy (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1967), p.302.
12. Society and the Victorians edition, 2 vols (Brighton : Harvester Press, 1969), I, p.45.

13. See Mrs Patrick Campbell (1922), p.33, for reference to a letter from her 'Aunt Kate', which in Mrs Campbell's own words, gives, 'a most vivid impression of the prejudiced attitude towards the theatrical profession in those days' (p.32).
14. In French drama there was a notable line of 'actress-plays', including, for example, Octave Feuillet's Rédemption (1860) and Paul Fournier's Une grande artiste (1891), which have actress-heroines who regret their career choice and lack of guidance, thereby blinding them to the pitfalls of their chosen profession, and barring them from respectable homes, husbands and families. Probably the most famous French 'actress-play' of the last century, is Adrienne Lecouvreur, based on the life of the eighteenth century actress. The play was written by Eugène Scribe and Ernest Legouvé, and performed by Rachel at the Théâtre de la République, April 1849. It portrays the image of the star-actress in a sentimental light; poisoned by her 'respectable', royal, rival-in-love. The role was subsequently interpreted by many leading actresses, notably Sarah Bernhardt, who not only played in the original version, but devised her own melodramatic re-working of the actress, and destructive, love-triangle theme (Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, 3 April 1907).
15. Pinero's thumbnail sketch of Hilda in Letty (1904), who becomes an actress at the end of the play, is a swift and simple device for expressing condemnation of the profession, even as a means of survival for a single, unsupported woman.
16. For statistics, see Michael Baker, The Rise of the Victorian Actor (London: Croom Helm, 1978), Appendix III : 'Increase between Censuses in the Recorded Numbers of Actors and Actresses in England and Wales, 1841 - 1891'.
17. Strand Magazine, 24 (September 1902), 249 - 256.

Section One : The Female Outcast : Seducer and Seduced

Chapter 1 : The 'Courtisane'

Introductory comments indicated how the general image of the nineteenth century actress was constructed, and how, connotatively, repertoires of roles might further the image of the actress as loose, venal woman. The purpose of this first section is to examine one particular type of role which encouraged such an image and which might be generally classified as the femme fatale type. For the purposes and limitations of the study, this is to be understood as the attempt of the female 'outsider' to survive in society at the expense of her male victim, beginning with a study of the French courtisane.

Peculiar to the Parisian stage from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1880's was the phenomenon of the courtisane figure. Product of the lavish excesses of the Second Empire, 'She was a brilliant, exotic bird that flourished in the days of a permissive Imperial Court, of widespread social licence and political irreponsibility'.¹ Her presence in the theatre, reflected a need for the middle classes to exorcise the threat she posed to their economic and social structures, whilst the courtisane herself, found the theatre a suitable vehicle for public display. Actresses frequently abandoned stage careers for the more lucrative profession of 'love', for example, Alice Orzy (1820-93), Mlle Maximum (1842-94) or Caroline Letessier (dates unknown), or as established grandes cocottes used the stage to promote their public beauty, on the basis that the greater the number of lovers, the greater her marketable value.

Joanna Richardson offers the following more detailed definition of the courtisane, which outlines the salient features of the type :

The courtesan is, in fact, a woman whose profession is love, and whose clients may be more or less distinguished. She may have been a respectable woman, cast by some unhappy affair into the demi-monde; she may be a woman of humble

birth, whose only hope of fortune seemed to be her physical attraction. She may be an actress who willingly abandoned her inadequate hopes in the theatre; she may simply be a careerist, set on a life of adventure. (p.1)

In short, she may be identified, on the basis of Richardson's definition as the woman who establishes her continued survival on the economics of personal beauty and consequently ostracizes herself irredeemably from society.

There are a great number of plays between the 1850's and 1880's which document the rise and fall of the courtisane figure, and in order to trace the development and changing attitudes to this type, representative texts have been chosen. Of equal importance to this study (and as an integral part of the methodology), are the actresses who undertook the roles and the degree to which their own stage images invited sympathy for the character, or alternatively how detrimental such roles were to their public images. Some English responses to adaptations, translations or performances of the original plays, are included to give some indication of why the courtisane remained a phenomenon of the French stage, and was not tolerated by English audiences. A chronological approach is adopted, to a large extent, in order to trace the evolution of the degree of sympathy invested in the type, which is notably modified towards the end of the Second Empire; a modification which requires explanation via historical and sociological factors.

Various studies written during the nineteenth-century, or retrospectively, such as Sidney D. Braun's The 'Courtisane' in the French Theatre From Hugo to Becque : 1831-1885,² have a descriptive utility, but are antiquated and limited in their analysis. Braun's study, for instance, documents the modification from the mid-century carefree, grisettes to the more venal, threatening type of the ensuing three to four decades, but fails to probe conditioning factors in any analytical depth.

Mario Praz's study, The Romantic Agony,³ whilst concerned with the arts and literature in general, as opposed to theatre, is of assistance in identifying the cultural climate. Praz views the nineteenth-century as divisible into ^{periods of} domination by the 'Fatal man' and 'Fatal woman', respectively :

The following point must be emphasized : the function of the flame which attracts and burns is exercised, in the first half of the century, by the Fatal man (the Byronic hero), in the second half by the Fatal woman; the moth destined for sacrifice is in the first case the woman, in the second the man. (p.216)

Although, as Praz explains, there are fatal women in the literature of the first part of the century (as indeed there have been in the literature of many ages), there was no established type, like that of the 'Byronic hero'. 'For a type - which is, in actual fact a cliché - to be created', writes Praz, 'it is essential that some figure should have made a profound impression on the popular mind' (p.201). Such, it might be legitimately argued, was the case with the courtisane figure of the Parisian stage; a type which embodied the qualities enumerated by Praz, of the femme fatale and her lover, of the second half of the nineteenth-century :

the lover is usually a youth, and maintains a passive attitude; he is obscure, and inferior either in condition or in physical exuberance to the woman, who stands in the same relation to him as do the female spider, the praying mantis, etc., to their respective males : sexual cannibalism is her monopoly. (pp.215-6)

The cannibalistic appetite of the courtisane is for male hearts and fortunes, as she eats her way through her victim's wealth and respectability.

The two main exponents of the pièce à thèse in the mid-century were Alexandre Dumas fils (1824-95) and Emile Augier (1820-89), both of whom portrayed the courtisane, or related demi-mondaine, or adventuress, in their exploration of the marriage question and examination of bourgeois morality.

Augier's L'aventurière, a four act verse drama, was played for the first time at the Comédie Française, 23 March 1848, and as the title indicates, treats the threat posed by the predatory fortune-seeking adventuress. Though removed from contemporary social problems in its foreign setting, use of verse, and treatment of the woman with a shady past, the play prefigures the onset of the 1850's pièce à thèse.

The shady past of Clorinde, the adventuress, remains obscure. There are sketchy references to her past career as the actress 'la Cléopâtre'; connotations of the Egyptian siren and low status profession, sufficed to establish the woman

with a past, and the connotations inherent in the word l'aventurière, defined by the Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française (1814) as one 'sans nom et sans fortune, et qui vit d'intrigues', reinforced the prejudice.

To convey the power and threat Clorinde has and poses to the respectable, elderly, gullible and widowed Monte-Prade, Augier uses a range of descriptive vocabulary, which undoubtedly has its roots in the descriptions of diabolical beauty established by the Romantics; 'sorcière', 'enchanteresse', 'vipère'. Monte-Prade's son, Fabrice, feels that nothing short of an exorcism is required to break her evil spell:

Notre père est, vois-tu, possédé d'un démon
Qu'on peut exorciser seulement par l'absence;
Tant qu'il est sous ses yeux, il est en sa puissance.⁴

As is typical of the keen-witted adventuress, Clorinde has discovered her 'superiority' over men:

Je ne peux pas trouver d'homme qui me domine;
Les plus spirituels dans mes mains ont tourné
En idiots, en gens à mener par le nez;
Si bien qu'en vérité, par fois je me demande
Pourquoi c'est l'homme et non la femme qui commande,
Et d'où peut venir l'air de domination
Qu'affecte ce faux roi de la création.⁵

So powerful is the hold Clorinde has over Monte-Prade, that it requires the utmost in trickery and deception to expose her character and mercenary purpose; tactics which form the main substance of the plot. Only when Clorinde relinquishes her attack on the family; gives up her role of professional fortune hunter, is she partially redeemed via the consolation of Fabrice's respect.

The role of Clorinde was never a popular or successful one with the many famous and talented actresses who undertook to play it. Théophile Gautier admired Mlle Anaïs, the original Clorinde, for her 'louables qualités de diction', but as she had become accustomed to playing young boy roles, he found this now lent itself to an unfortunate deficiency of feminine charm, required to ensnare her

male victim.⁶ In the revival of the play in April 1860, Mme Plessy gave a performance of Clorinde that Sarcey, for one, did not enjoy, stating, 'Je ne pourrais en parler sans une certaine vivacité de mécontentement, et mieux vaut me taire'.⁷ Barbey d'Aurevilly shared Sarcey's antipathy of Mme Plessy's performance, which he recalls when discussing the play's later revival in 1881, with Mlle Croizette as Clorinde; a performance which he found as bad, if not worse, than Mme Plessy's.⁸

It was well known that Sarah Bernhardt hated the part and being required to play it was the final straw in a series of arguments which brought about her abrupt departure from the Comédie Française, after only one performance, given on 17 April 1880. She intensely disliked the role and had apparently not had sufficient time to study it (not that that would have improved her temper or performance) and resented the insistence of the director, Perrin, that she should play it. A bad press the following morning, notably Auguste Vitu's allusion in Le Figaro to a gestural similarity between Bernhardt's Clorinde and the conception of Zola's Virginie in L'assomoir (Ambigu, January 1879), an insinuation of 'vulgarity' fiercely resented by Bernhardt, resulted in her tendered resignation.⁹ As a consequence of her departure, Mlle Croizette essayed the part, as Barbey d'Aurevilly described, though like her predecessors, without success. Clearly the role was odious, both to actresses and audiences.

In England, Augier's L'aventurière was adapted by T.W. Robertson and performed under the title, Home, at the Haymarket, 14 January 1869. The change in title is an indication of a significant difference in dramatic emphasis. Whereas the original drama sets out to demonstrate the power of the courtisane as a threat to the family, the translated playtext emphasizes the strength of the family unit in overcoming the threat of the outsider. The change is indicative of a difference in moral tone, English audiences preferring Robertson's more boisterous humour to Augier's pointers towards social comment. It also reflected the fact that Robertson had written the play as a vehicle for the actor, E.A. Sothorn, and although Ada Cavendish made a 'notable impression'¹⁰ as the English widow, Mrs Pinchbeck, the play's popularity hinged initially upon Sothorn's interpretation of Alfred Dorrison (the Fabrice equivalent), in which he achieved 'conspicuous success'.¹¹

The figure of Mrs Pinchbeck is the English substitute for the courtisane - adventuress. As a widow, she is established as a target of fun, given the comic tradition of widows with voracious sexual appetites. She therefore embodies a sense of social stigma, but at no point constitutes a threat to the family unit. This is notably due to the constant visual presence on stage of the portrait of the deceased mother, signifying the sanctity of hearth and home which must not be violated, and reduction in the stage presence of Mrs Pinchbeck. Her first appearance on stage, for example, is from 'outside window' and only her voice, rather than presence, reaches those on stage. So although certain comments are made with reference to Mrs Pinchbeck's power to charm, the widow is no equal to her French counterpart and certainly does not demonstrate the evil magnetism of the femme fatale.

Four years after the production of Augier's play in Paris, the courtisane was to receive a more sympathetic portrayal in La dame aux camélias, by Dumas fils, first played at the Vaudeville 2 February 1852. This was a first attempt to show the realities of the courtisane lifestyle, its hollowness, insecurities and wretchedness, whilst inviting sympathy by romanticizing the figure of Marguerite, who expiates her existence by recognition of her alienation or dislocation within society. In a modern analysis, Roland Barthes describes the play's impact and popularity as due to its treatment of a 'mythology of Love'; a conflict of passions:

A simple social disparity, taken up and amplified by the opposition of two ideologies of love, cannot but produce here a hopeless entanglement, a hopelessness of which Marguerite's death (however cloying it is on the stage) is, so to speak, the algebraic symbol.¹²

Unlike her successors, Marguerite still inhabits the world of Prevost's Manon Lescaut, where a woman's beauty buys her wealthy lovers but cannot afford the price of true love. She is still an omen of bankruptcy and financial ruin for her wealthy suitors, though shortly to be suppressed by an outraged bourgeoisie who resented the mangeuse d'or eking out a parasitic existence by virtue of its hard earned money.

It is on the role of Marguerite that the movement towards sympathy depends.

Given that there was much contemporary debate subsequent to the play's production ¹³ on the moral issues depicting the life of a courtisane on stage, the art of the actress contributed much to a sympathetic reading. Marie Doche was the first Marguerite¹⁴ and is described by Théophile Gautier as playing the part 'en actrice supérieure', lending her talents to Dumas's memorial to Marie Duplessis : ¹⁵

Ce n'est pas une froide et pure image qu'il a taillée dans la blancheur du pentélique, c'est une figure qui se meut et respire, qui aime et qui souffre, qui a de vraies larmes dans les yeux et de vrai sang dans les veines. - Marie Duplessis a enfin la statue que nous réclamions pour elle. Le poète a fait la besogne du sculpteur, et, au lieu du corps, nous avons l'âme, à qui Madame Doche prête sa forme charmante.¹⁶

Gautier particularly recommends the 'scène de l'agonie' in the last act :

Jamais Ary Scheffer n'a posé sur un oreiller de dentelles une tête plus idéalement pale et laissant plus transparaître l'âme : c'est une grâce navrante, un charme doubleux qui vous ravit et vous fait mal. Les agonies de Clarisse Harlowe et d'Adrienne Lecouvreur sont égalées, sinon surpassées. ¹⁷

A drawn out death scene was a stock in trade theatrical device for enlisting sympathy from audiences - on this occasion they were reduced to floods of tears.

For the actress, the role provided plenty of scope for talent, introducing a wide range of emotions undergone in the transformation from courtisane to jeune fille. As Roger J.B. Clark states in his introduction,

For Marguerite is first and foremost ^{a role} comédienne - i.e. a vehicle allowing the gifted comédienne to express the full range of her talents and which, in return, needs her powerful assistance if it is to be filled out and brought to life on the stage - rather than a character that appears per se complex and interesting, and that can be visualized on the printed page before the intervention of the actress. ¹⁸

Marie Doche was persuaded to return from London to act the part, having left Paris dissatisfied with the roles she had been offered. ¹⁹ After her performance, the role was subsequently to tempt many of the leading actresses, at home and abroad. ²⁰

The interest of so many famous actresses in the role of Marguerite assured Dumas's play of a lively future, though subsequent generations were to wonder what had created the impact. An interesting change in focal interest occurred, when Mme Doche performed in a revival of the play (Vaudeville, January 1868), in which the role of Prudence, acted by Mme Alexis upstaged that of Marguerite. According to Barbey d'Aurevilly, the change reflected modifications in audience composition and tastes :

Je crois que dans la salle de ce soir, au Vaudeville, les femmes honnêtes étaient en dominance. Les cocottes, les Marguerites de la plate-bande Gautier, n'y fleurissaient pas, du moins d'une manière visible; car il y a les violettes du vice comme les violettes de la vertu, qui aiment les petits coins et qui en ont la modestie. Eh bien, ce soir, dans ce public dont je vous ai dit la physionomie très bourgeoise, savez-vous le rôle qui a le plus impressionné ces honnêtes femmes et ces jeunes filles à châles à carreaux qui étaient là?... Croyez-vous que ç'ait été Madame Doche, dans ce rôle à larmes, à crachements de sang et à sacrifices à bras raccourci, si grossièrement bâti pour faire naître la grossière émotion dans les âmes qui ne sont pas bien difficiles?...Croyez-vous que ç'ait été la Dame aux camélias, l'héroïne de la pièce, assez corrompue, quoique non assez pourrie, pour intéresser? Allons, bah! c'était bon, cela, il y a quelques années! Mais aujourd'hui, l'intérêt concentré, l'approbation, l'émotion gaie, plus puissante et plus en éveil que l'émotion sentimentale et triste, a été pour le rôle de Prudence. (Théâtre contemporain, pp.346-7)

In England the play was banned by the censor on moral grounds. English tastes would not condone a sympathetic portrayal of a parasitic outsider, though watered down versions of the play were received in the adaptation Heartsease and Verdi's opera La Traviata.²¹ When the play was finally performed, however, English audiences were treated to the talents of various international star actresses.

Bernhardt was the first in a long line, undertaking the role in the June of 1881, prior to her rendition of the part in Paris. The object of her performance was to turn Marguerite into a saint, investing the role with 'angelic' and 'ineffable sweetness', until the reviewer for The Times was convinced he could see 'the halo of a saint upon her forehead'.²² Sarcey, present at the performance, claimed she invested the role with a poetry none of the previous Marguerites had achieved and the Theatre concluded that the shouts of 'seule seule', from the audience, showed that the success was hers and hers alone.²³ In her death scene, nowhere



Above, Duse in the 'letter scene' from the last act of La dame aux camélias ;
below, Bernhardt in the same scene



was the potential pathos more fully exploited, and she played it quite differently to Mme Doche :

Madame Doche, whose name is identified with the part of Marguerite, was accustomed to sit down upon a couch and die holding her lover's hand, but Mdlle Bernhardt remains standing till the last, and falls forward upon the bosom of her lover, who, with a cry of alarm, lays her down straight and stiff upon the floor. It may be presumed that Mdlle Bernhardt has fortified herself with some physiological authority for this unusual action. Certainly, in the ordinary course of things, a person who died standing might be expected to collapse. 24

The emotion of the part was the key to her interpretation and continued success in the role, unlike Duse's subsequent Marguerite, rated so highly by Shaw, and a performance which he opined, far outstripped that of Bernhardt. 25 Not everyone agreed, 26 and the two actresses who were by far the most talked about Marguerites of the nineteenth century, were constantly compared or rather contrasted. Sarah the 'complex, artificial, product' aimed at 'beauty'; Signora Duse, 'absolutely natural and sincere' at 'truth'. 27 The French actress created the painted courtisane awakening to a pure love; the Italian, unpainted, gave a distinguished courtisane, 'une grisette de Botticelli', 28 a different kind of Marguerite to Bernhardt's, 'not the light woman, to whom love has come suddenly, as a new sentiment coming suddenly into her life, but the simple, instinctively loving woman, in whom we see nothing of the demi-monde, only the natural woman in love'. 29

Since the nineteenth century, Dumas's play has remained in the repertoire of revived drama (unlike so many of the plays from the same period which are no longer performed, and are only of historic interest), a recent example being the adaptation Camille, by Pam Gems, performed at The Other Place, Stratford-Upon-Avon, 1984, giving newcomer Frances Barber, the opportunity to join the impressive line of Marguerites. 30

Capitalising on the success of Dumas's play, the Vaudeville followed through the diet of social drama with Théodore Barrière and Lambert Thiboust's Les filles de marbre; 'drame en cinq actes, mêlé de chant', 17 May 1853. 31 Already the emphasis has changed from sympathetic idealization, to condemnation of the professional

lover who threatens the social structure. As Théophile Gautier notes, both plays were equally successful, though completely opposite in composition; Les filles de marbre being the antidote to La dame aux camélias.³²

As in Augier's L'aventurière, the condemnation is expressed through a vituperative expression of diabolical beauty. Marco, the courtisane who ensnares her victim, the sculptor Raphaël, is repeatedly described in such terms as 'dangereuse sirène' and 'créature bizarre'. The most explicit description of diabolical beauty is given by Desgenais, the raisonneur of the play, while trying to release his friend Raphaël from Marco's clutches :

Je dirais à mon fils naïf collégien très-fort en thème: 'Tu vois bien ces demoiselles qui ont des diamants, ce sont des diables...elles ont des cornes ...on ne les voit pas, mais elles en ont...ces petits ongles roses, ce sont des griffes; elles vous ruinent la bourse et le coeur; après quoi elles vous conduisent en enfer par le chemin de Clichy. 33

Desgenais's reasoning is as ineffectual as Tiberge's sermons were to Des Grieux, though he offers less chaste advice, in that he suggests Raphaël might indulge in the double standard of sexual morality without being harmed, and advocates a liaison with a grisette (III.3.). The distinction, therefore, between the grande cocotte as financial drain and homebreaker, and the loyal, but less grand, mistress, is quite clear. The former constitutes a threat, the latter is a condoned form of illicit sexual liaison.

The role of Marco was played by Mlle Fargueil, and Gautier gives an indication of the way in which she presented the vituperative but enticing femme fatale :

Mlle Fargueil a joué le rôle de Marco en comédienne de premier ordre; elle a figé, pour rendre l'idée des auteurs, sa beauté délicate dans une pâte marmoréenne glacée, brillante, polie, sur laquelle glissent tous les sentiments humains comme des gouttes de pluie sur une surface vernisée: on ne saurait être plus imperméable. Quelle tranquille insolence! quelle irritante froideur! Elle brûle comme la neige et charme comme la vipère. On la sent mortelle et on l'aime. 34

Though ^{Marco} clearly signifies a dangerous threat to a susceptible male victim, Gautier cannot help but wish some of her charms, though put to a good rather than bad use, might be invested in the far less interesting 'honnêtes femmes'.

To have a mistress who is faithful and economical is one thing, to marry her, another, and a theme which introduces itself increasingly into the social drama, is the horror and degradation of a mésalliance'. Dumas's Le demi-monde, played for the first time at the Gymnase 20 March 1855, follows through such a theme, expressing acceptance of an alliance with the demi-mondaine but not marriage. This is no longer the world of Marguerite. The sympathy which Dumas aroused by drawing upon the 'mythology of Love', and the martyrdom of Marguerite, culminating in a death scene, guaranteed to reduce the house to floods of tears, is replaced by the scheming Suzanne d'Ange. Marguerite's redemption relies essentially on her recognition of the spiritual value of love divorced from a materialistic context (hence the paradoxical realization and non-realization of her passion), whereas Suzanne fails to recognize any value beyond her own schemes to gain respectability. Given that the play also traces the fortunes of this 'société bâtarde', its structure is built around the complexities of its inhabitants and diffuses its centre of interest, unlike La dame aux camélias, which established Marguerite as the heart and centre of interest, again, a theatrical device for alignment of sympathy. Dumas is now concerned with illustrating the way in which this outcast group is a current social problem, a 'création moderne', resulting from new legislation which gave the husband the right to punish an adulterous wife:

depuis que les maris, armés du Code, ont eu le droit d'écarter du sein de la famille la femme qui oubliait les engagements pris, il s'est opéré dans les moeurs conjugales une modification qui a créé un monde nouveau. 35

The days of Molière in which the husband was made to look a ridiculous figure as a cuckold are over. The legislation of the 1804 Code civil, stated clearly that a husband owed protection to his wife, and the wife owed obedience to her husband. The husband therefore had full legal control over all his wife's actions. On the question of adultery, the law stated that a wife was found automatically guilty, but the husband was only guilty if he kept his mistress in la maison commune; an inequality based on the assumption that a wife's adultery had more serious consequences for the family.

In short, the husband now had the legal right to turn a wayward wife out of house and home, swelling the ranks of demi-mondaines. In many ways, Dumas's play marks the beginning of the treatment of the female outcast as a social problem, as will become clear in the analysis of later drama.

The actress who had the difficult task of playing the role of the unpopular Suzanne d'Ange, was Rose Chéri. Chéri had begun her career by playing in works of the old Scribe school, prior to establishing her reputation as 'an outstanding interpreter of the new' at the Gymnase.³⁶ Sarcey has the following recollection of her performance to offer :

D'elle, je ne me rappelle qu'un mouvement qui m'avait frappé, je ne sais pourquoi, d'une façon extraordinaire. C'était au cinquième acte. Suzanne vient d'apprendre qu'elle est vaincue, et qu'il lui faut, quittant la place, retourner à son ancienne société. Mme Rose Chéri s'en allait prendre son châte, qu'elle avait déposé sur un fauteuil, et le mettait sur ses épaules avec un geste ironique, qui sentait si bien la fille entretenue, que toute la salle en tressaillait d'étonnement.³⁷

For Jouvin, reviewing her performance for Le Figaro, it was the fourth act, in which she was 'surtout effrayante de désespoir', which he considered her finest,³⁸ and Gautier claimed that she turned the role into one of her finest creations.³⁹

If the role of Marguerite had proved indigestible to the English palate, it was unlikely that Suzanne would fare any better. Writing on a London performance in 1879, in which Mlle Croizette, unpopular with English audiences, played Suzanne, Sarcey described the reactions of the English audience as bemused and indignant :

Il faut croire les Anglais sur parole quand ils avouent eux-mêmes que beaucoup de choses leur échappent dans les pièces que nous leur jouons. Il est à peu près certain que Le demi-monde est une de celles où il a dû rester pour eux le plus de passages obscurs. La pièce n'est pas tombée; car il est impossible que rien tombe devant ce public qui est, de parti pris, courtois et bienveillant. Elle n'a pas été goûtée; cela est certain.

Et j'ai retrouvé, le lendemain, cette impression dans tous les journaux. Quelques-uns même l'ont accentuée d'une façon un peu vive, insistant sur les côtés qui sont choquants pour les moeurs anglaises.⁴⁰

If English audiences were to maintain a prudish objection to the demi-mondaine, French audiences were soon to have had their fill of women with dubious pasts

and assumed respectable identities. Augier's Le mariage d'Olympe, played four months later at the Vaudeville, 17 July 1855, was unfavourably received, owing to the Parisian audience's surfeit of courtisane dramas. The play is a fervent condemnation of the woman with an infamous past penetrating the ranks of the respectable. There is no doubt as to the moral censorship with which Augier treats Pauline (formerly Olympe Taverny), and his staunch defence of the family.

Paul de Saint-Victor predicted a limited success for the play, based on curiosity and controversy, and admired Mlle Fargueil's undertaking of yet another antipathetic, courtisane role, tackled 'd'aplomb et d'endurcissement'.⁴¹ However, Auguste Villemont registered greater indignation and discontent, commenting both on the outrage of the bourgeois family spectatorship, and the inability of Mlle Fargueil - in spite of acknowledged talent - to save the role from its odious connotations.⁴²

The play's subsequent history was equally disastrous. Writing about an anonymous adaptation at the Comedy Theatre, 10 June 1897 (For the Honour of the Family), Shaw revealed how outmoded the moral defence had already become:

it is amusing and not uninteresting to watch Olympe nowadays, and note how completely her nostalgie de la boue is justified as against the dull and sensual respectability of the father-in-law. In fact, the play now so plainly shows that it is better for a woman to be a liar and a rascal than a mere lady, that

I should be inclined to denounce it as dangerously immoral if there were no further and better alternatives open to her. 43

Given the degree of venality and corruption embodied in the roles of Pauline, Suzanne and Marco, a sympathetic response was inevitably ruled out.

In the late 1860's to early 1880's, the question of the woman as social outcast, continues to be a source of interest for dramatists, and the world of the demi-monde, created by the sharp demarcation between licit and illicit sex, explored from three different angles, namely, the faux ménages, the last of the mangeuses d'or, and the woman who falls from respectability to the demi-monde. All of these aspects arose largely as a result of the marriage laws which added legislative weight to the inequalities between the sexes. Representative texts have been chosen to follow these three strands through to the 1880's, deviating

from the chronology, where necessary, for the sake of thematic unity.

The first of these groups may be illustrated by reference to Edouard Pailleron's Les faux ménages, played at the Théâtre Français, 7 January 1869, and Alphonse Daudet's Sapho, played at the Gymnase, 18 December 1885.

The affluent middle class male was beginning to find marriage a costly business. Working and saving towards the purchase of the 'ideal' marriage, cost the suitor his youth. Hence the growing attraction for the so-called 'faux ménages', outside 'le Code'. In Pailleron's Les faux ménages, the attractions and dangers of such liaisons are outlined by the raisonneur, Armand's cousin George :

Ce n'était qu'un caprice, on n'était qu'un amant,
On se trouve en ménage, on ne sait pas comment;
Comme ces voyageurs qui, venus par envie
De visiter la ville, y sont restés leur vie.
Et puis, du faux amour naît la fausse amitié,
Faite un peu d'égoïsme et beaucoup de pitié.
Parfois on se révolte, on se quitte, on se fâche!
Mais on revient toujours, l'habitude rend lâche. 44

The play traces the faux ménage between Esther and Armand. Esther has more in common with the griset^e type; a woman generally of humble origin, who seeks out a lover for support, but one to whom she remains loyal. She does not aspire to the giddy heights of wealth, like her sister courtisane. For instance, when Mme Armand asks her son whether he has a mistress, he replies,

Une maîtresse! Vous en êtes encor
A la fille folâtre, à la mangeuse d'or...
Nous avons bien changé tout cela, je vous jure.
L'espèce dont s'agit est de conduite pure,
Elle est même économe, elle vise au renom;
On lui donne son bras, on lui prête son nom,
On l'entoure de soins dont vous serez jalouse,
Hors le titre et le rang, elle a toute de l'épouse. (I.6.p.25)

There is a strong degree of sympathy for Esther, again, because Pailleron, like Dumas in his portrayal of Marguerite, has drawn upon the love mythology. Given the more humble scale of Les faux ménages and the frugal needs of Esther, it is more fitting that her recognition of alienation should be resolved by religious

retreat than by melodramatic expiation by death. Pailleron in the second act puts forward an argument between Mme Armand and Esther, respectively the wounded mother and the misguided, abandoned girl-child, each arguing their grievances. The scene is not unlike the confrontation^f between Marguerite and Duval's father, as has been pointed out :

je ne pense pas qu'il ait pu dissimuler que, dans Les faux ménages, Madame Armand remplit à l'égard de son fils Paul et de la pauvre Esther, exactement le même rôle que M. Duval, dans La dame aux camélias à l'égard de son fils Armand et de la malheureuse Marguerite Gautier. 45

However, any attempt to confront the sordid realities of life, is cushioned, protected and distanced from the audience , by the verse composition of the play which removes it from the naturalistic effect of prose dialogue.

A common device used by dramatists of this period to establish a moral defence of the family, is the concern for the family name, which embodies a legacy of honour and tradition, particularly strengthened during the Second Empire, when a name was the entrée to all the aristocratic salons and circles :

le Second Empire fit la société parisienne; une société nouvelle qui valait bien l'autre, puis qu'elle était composée de toutes les aristocraties,- la naissance, l'héroïsme, l'éloquence, la plume, tous les arts. Jamais un chef de l'Etat n'avait été plus hospitalier pour tous ceux qui portaient un nom. 46

Pailleron introduces the preoccupation with the family name and sense of honour, by creating a dissolute father-figure, who is concerned that his son should not tread the same path of dishonour :

Pauvre diable! Ah cà! Mais ni son vieux maître austère,
Ni sa mère, personne alors ne lui dit non,
Qu'avec cette candeur il joue ainsi son nom? (II.9.p.50)

In the final, anagnorisis scene of the drama, Ernest's complete confession ultimately sways all concerned into accepting the impossibility of a marriage between Armand and the outcast Esther; despite their sympathies for the latter. He insists that

his son take up the family name, 'Vous pouvez le porter, je ne le porte plus'.

The choice of Mlle Favart for the role of Esther is an interesting one.

Prior to the 1860's Mlle Favart had built her reputation at the Comédie Française,

on mainly classical roles, having succeeded Rachel, and the theatre of Musset.

In the 1860's she translated from the 'ancient' to 'modern' and in fact became more successful in the drame bourgeois than in the classical. Significantly, Pailleron's play is a verse drama, and therefore connotatively aligned with the 'ancient' rather than the 'modern', and a suitable 'bridging' drama, both for the actress and her audiences.⁴⁷

Looking back at the career of her one time idol, Sarah Bernhardt demystifies Favart's greatness, which relied upon the aura of chaste, bourgeois charm, which she emanated in spite of what Sarah describes as an ill-proportioned physique, as nothing more than an appeal to 'une sensibilité grossière'.⁴⁸ Critics of her performance in Les faux ménages did not share this view and most had nothing but warm praise to offer. Jouvin delighted in her 'beaux crix',⁴⁹ and Wolff singled out one in particular, namely that which escaped as her past suddenly caught up with her, and was filled with such anger and anguish that it made the audience shudder, and pleaded more successfully than the most beautifully composed speech advocating the rehabilitation of women.⁵⁰ The most ardent praise came from Sarcey in Le Temps :

On peut dire aujourd'hui sans flatterie à Mlle Favart qu'elle est la première comédienne de Paris. Elle a porté dans le rôle d'Esther toute la passion qu'y auraient mise d'autres artistes, célèbres pour leurs éclats de tendresse ou de ferveur : ce qui n'appartient qu'à elle, c'est cette composition savante, cette diction mesurée, et qui, dans les mouvements les plus pathétiques, observe encore les nuances les plus fines. A diverses reprises, elle a transporté toute la salle. Mais ce qui est admirable c'est que d'un bout à l'autre, elle a satisfait les connaisseurs par un jeu incessamment varié, et qui reste toujours fin et juste. L'art ne saurait aller plus loin. Il est si parfait, qu'on ne l'aperçoit plus.⁵¹

Special pleading on behalf of relations that society considers morally reprehensible, is also woven into Daudet's Sapho. What it describes is the bastard society created by clusters of illicit liaisons. The play focuses on the relationship between Fanny Legrand and Jean Gaussin. Fanny, like Esther, belongs to the 'grisette

type, devoting herself to her lover and using her arts of seduction to persuade Gaussin to let her stay to take care of him. Though now displaying the devotion and thrifty traits of the grisette, Fanny does have a public past, aligning her with the mangeuse d'or (there is mention, for instance, of a previous lover who is now in prison for forging money in order to keep her), and signified by her public identity as Sapho. This image was created by the sculptor Caudal, and one, which when she fears she has lost Gaussin, the man she truly loves, she violently rejects :

Tu m'avais donné ce nom de passion, de folie; cherche m'en un autre, parrain, et cherche-le moi bien maintenant, cynique et dur, pas un nom d'amour surtout, finie la mythologie. 52

The notion of a male perception and definition of female beauty is an important one and illustrative of the masochistic tendency on the part of the male victim who creates and determines the framework of the female image with disastrous consequences, a theme Shaw was later to develop in Pygmalion (1912). This trait of masochism is further allied to the creative mind of the artist who requires to move outside the restrictive conventions in order to satisfy his imaginative powers, as illustrated by Fanny's former circle of friends and lovers, all artists in various capacities.

The world of Daudet's Sapho is populated by representative types of the demi-monde, or rather, clichés that were conceived by the 'popular mind' as representative, and a degree of sympathy for Fanny is contrived by off-setting her genuine love for Gaussin against the back-cloth of unsuccessful and illicit relationships. Daudet has also introduced a further dimension into his treatment of this social problem, in that he does not conceive of marriage as an ideal. Gaussin's passions are not likely to be met by his safety-valve marriage to the chaste and innocent Irène Vitalis. Ultimately the 'faux ménage' is broken by Fanny who is too exhausted and hurt by love to continue with Gaussin, her retreat constituting a further sympathy device.

Sympathy was also established in the interpretation of the role by Mme Hading.

Having made her *début* in operettas at the Renaissance, she then established a reputation as 'interpreter of social drama' at the Gymnase, which she joined in 1883, subsequently marrying the director Konig, in 1884.⁵³ She had a frailty and sadness connoted by her own physique and voice, which clearly suited the role of outcast in the diet of social drama the Gymnase offered its audiences in the 1880's. Vitu documented the increasing emotionality of her performance, which left the audience in abundant tears of sympathy,⁵⁴ whilst in *Le Gaulois* she was credited for succeeding in the complex role of a woman coloured by her many different environs, past and present, and depicting a wealth of detail, without being swamped by the minutiae of her portrait.⁵⁵

Yet praise was tempered by criticism of what Sarcey described as an all too perfect technique, inclined to be unsurprising and predictable.⁵⁶ Writing retrospectively at the turn of the century, J.T. Grein recalled her early career of the 'bravura parts of the Second Empire' as wanting in 'magnetism'.⁵⁷ The grace of her movement and gestures, 'the expressiveness of her wondrous eyes', indicated a craft well learnt, but had not enabled her to conquer her audiences by 'emotional gifts'.⁵⁸

When, at the turn of the century, English audiences were to see Daudet's *Sapho*, the role was interpreted by an actress of far greater magnetism, namely Gabrielle Réjane, whose performance on the London stage in 1901 was warmly and enthusiastically received by critics, Grein amongst them. Grein's critical attention was firstly drawn, however, to the highly moral nature of Daudet's novel, on which the play was based, calling it a 'guiding star in a young man's life' and criticizing the play for changing the moral emphasis, thereby showing a youth 'how to be happy though immoral'.⁵⁹ Others detected a more censorious note, drawing connotative analogies between the recently exhibited Rodin sculpture, *Fin d'amour*, of two figures, one male and one female, 'back to back, their faces distorted with the unutterable weariness and repulsion of satiety', but insupportable, and Daudet's tableau of the *faux ménage*.⁶⁰

Yet it was Réjane's performance which was considered the outstanding highlight.

She brought to the role her own connotations of 'Frenchness' or rather the 'Parisian', and succeeded, where Hading had partially failed, in governing the audience's emotions :

Réjane, in fine, is an actress who has a power of governing. She is in certain measure a ruler of men, for she controls our mirth as well as our sentiment. She gives herself so entirely that the tears frequently stream from her eyes. She forces us to capitulate in unconditional admiration. 61

The image of the actress in this instance constitutes the basis of a sympathetic reading. The scripted role becomes incidental to the actress's own powers of persuasion; 'it escapes out of Daudet's keeping into Réjane's, and begins to live with a vehemence which Daudet only aimed at, never attained'. 62 She conquered, not by means of idealized femininity, but by a connotative combination of the vulgarity of the gamin, the bohemian and irregular beauty. For Réjane was not endowed with stereotypical beauty and had a peculiarly lopsided facial expression, which Aubrey Beardsley exposed in his portrait-drawings, which quite outraged the actress. 63 Paradoxically, the success of Sapho rested on the compatability of Réjane's willingness 'to be ugly' with the ugliness of the role :

Where Sarah Bernhardt would arrange the emotion for some thrilling effect, where Duse would purge the emotion of all its attributes but some fundamental nobility, Réjane takes the big, foolish, dirty thing just as it is. Is not that, perhaps, the supreme merit of acting? 64

Her success is underlined by Grein's comments on an adaptation the following year at the Adelphi; an adaptation which modified the mainspring of the action from love to 'voluptuousness', with 'nothing to beautify the irregular life' :

Daudet's Sapho was a woman of a certain type, yet a woman capable of reclamation by love. But the Sapho of this play is immoral to the core, and were it not that there is a spark of maternity left in her, which harmonises badly with the character as it is presented to us, one would ask whether it is permissible to bring such a fille de joie on the stage. 65

In this production, the role was undertaken by Miss Olga Nethersole who failed



Réjane's 'irregular beauty'

to achieve control over her audience's emotions :

there is a consummate art (not all good art) in her portrayal, but wanting is the heart, the throb, the sob, the abandon, the unconsciousness of surroundings, which conquer the spectator and hold him fast until he bows in worship and submission. 66

This criticism of the actress is not only a reflection on the individual, but reveals a wider based criticism of the method of acting adopted. Max Beerbohm's description of Olga Nethersole's style as a conscious display of artistry, ⁶⁷ pinpoints more clearly prevalent criticism of the acting method based on distancing oneself from the character played. Mastering techniques would make you a capable actress, Beerbohm argues, but achieving greatness depended upon being able to command audiences, and that meant being inside and not outside the character. Such are the criteria constantly employed by nineteenth-century critics when determining the standing of an actress within the profession or comparing her to her contemporaries. Hence, played by Rjane, the 'ugliness' of Daudet's drama was sublimated in a frenzy of audience emotion and sympathy generated by the actress; interpreted by Olga Nethersole, it was open to moral condemnation as the spectator was not engaged by the actress in dramatic events, nor had his/her sympathies worked upon.

The second type of social drama, continuing the line begun by Dumas's Le demi-monde, can be illustrated by Edouard Foussier and Charles Edmond's La baronne, performed at the Odéon, 23 November 1871, and Arsène Houssaye's Mademoiselle Trente-Six Vertus, played at the Ambigu, 3 May 1873.

The baroness, Edith Vanberg, has been described as 'one of the most detestable women ever introduced on the stage, either in Paris or elsewhere', ⁶⁸ and as 'l'un des plus complètement criminels et des plus antipathiques qu'on ait jamais mis à la scène'. ⁶⁹ Descendant of Augier's Pauline or Dumas's Suzanne, a new term has been derived to label the adventuress-fortune hunter :

-Bref, nous appelons Ondines toutes ces aimables personnes qui, pour une cause ou une autre, ne trouvant pas à la maison l'époux de leur choix, viennent se tapir dans leurs charmes, au bord des ondes à la mode, alcalines ou sulfureuses, peu importe! 70

The demi-monde water sprites floated through the spa in search of unsuspecting male victims :

Ulysee, naviguant au milieu des sirènes, se bouchait les oreilles avec de la cire... Epiménide, après treize ans de sommeil dans son désert de Savenay, affronte les eaux de Wiesbade, sans coton dans les oreilles...l'imprudent! 71

The substance of the dramatic plot is structured around the trickery and nasty motives of la baronne, who succeeds in outwitting her adversaries until the fifth act of the play. There is not an ounce of sympathy for the heartless anti-heroine. Instead the play advocates fierce moral indignation, a staunch defence of the family as the social unit, and the honour of the family name. Like Augier's Monte-Prade, the count (de Savenay) is a widower and the play preaches the notion that the mother - figure of the family, though deceased, should not be usurped. The removal of the mother's portrait from its place of honour in the grand salon signifies the disintegration of the family unit and the disasters which ensue.

Mlle Adèle Page was the actress who faced the difficult task of portraying such an antipathetic and dangerous outcast, and was not entirely successful. Jouvin described her as pulling through skillfully; ⁷²Sarcey as giving the role a 'grâce féline', which made it more acceptable;⁷³ Vitu noting the absence of sufficient charm to account for the blinding of her male victim. ⁷⁴ The difficulty of her task was increased by Bernhardt's accomplishment in the good, dutiful, daughter role. It was not one which Sarcey liked to see her in, preferring her in tragedy roles and clothed in an 'antique' costume, rather than in the less exotic, contemporary dress of a convent-educated, young lady, but conceded the strength of her contribution to the production. ⁷⁵

At the request of M. Moreau, director of the Ambigu, who was seeking a drama of contemporary life of the kind on offer at the Vaudeville or Gymnase, Houssaye adapted one of his many courtisane stories, Lucie, histoire d'une fille perdue, into a drama in seven tableaux. Houssaye's Mademoiselle Trente-Six Vertus depicts the world of the courtisane salon. Lucie, courtisane and actress, is identified by her public name, 'Mlle Trente-Six Vertus', ironically named, because

she has no virtues. Betrayed by love in a luckless past, she now chooses her victims and parades her diabolic beauty from the platform of the theatre. The interesting developments in this play centre on the fact that Lucie does not repent of her lifestyle, neither is she fiercely punished for her 'bad' deeds. The 'good' characters, Gotran and his sister's friend, Clotilde Marcelli, both die as a result of fatal contact with the courtisane world. Lucie merely loses a potential, rich 'protecteur' and the final scenes of the play juxtapose the unrepentant, banqueting Lucie and the death of the hopelessly ensnared Gotran. In her own words,

Vous imaginez-vous que vous allez me convertir à la vertu?...Mais regardez donc autour de vous et dites si l'heure du repentir a sonné pour moi? Et d'ailleurs, le repentir, c'est le regret de ne pouvoir recommencer. (V.3.p.189)

The Parisian public of the original production were outraged. Clotilde played by Mlle Pazza, was an incarnation of 'la beauté, la douceur, et la force de la vertu', but Mlle Colombier who played Lucie could not extract anything more than boos (Houssaye's preface, pp.28-9). Le Figaro credited her with a courageous fight in an odious role, ⁷⁶ whilst Jouvin noted that none of the players could save the play and the audience - indicative of their feelings - omitted to applaud Mlle Colombier. ⁷⁷ Sarcey thought she lacked the necessary 'l'élégance de tournure et la distinction d'accent', and had an ill-suited 'l'air bon garçon'. ⁷⁸ The fault was not entirely Colombier's, as Sarcey emphasised. Houssaye had outraged the dramatic convention of unconditional acceptance of the chasteness and innocence of the jeune fille. To suspect ill of her, as the 'hero' does, and bring about her death, transgressed the dramatic convention. The whole play was therefore considered a mistake, 'il a offensé les oreilles de ses contemporains', ⁷⁹ and as Le Gaulois pointed out, Houssaye had clearly erred in thinking his audiences would watch on stage that which they were prepared to read. ⁸⁰

As a result of such criticism, Houssaye wrote his own defence of the play and added it as a preface (as cited) to the published work. His defence, like Shaw's preface to Mrs Warren's Profession, argued along the lines of wanting to

show the world as it really is; to educate the public into the sordid realities of life :



Fallait-il donc mettre la courtisane dans un cadre de fleurs, avec les couleurs du prisme, avec les rayonnements du mirage? Je l'ai peinte comme elle est, fière de son cynisme, altière dans sa volonté de tout flétrir, ivre d'or, de luxe et d'orgueil. (preface, p.7)

Houssaye expresses his belief in the moral aims of theatre, that it can be used as a platform from which to preach. He attacks male pride for falling for these women, for desiring this public 'property' which increases in value in relation to the number of lovers, and defends his ending to the play by stating, 'J'ai eu le courage périlleux de préférer cette immoralité vengeresse à un dénouement prévu où la vertu est toujours récompensée et toujours le crime puni' (preface, pp.10-11). Houssaye also makes an interesting comment on the moral values peculiar to theatre, which he claims has 'des pudeurs non pareilles et des indulgences plénières tout aussi inexplicables' (p.3). At the Comédie Française one can portray the adulteress wife, without outraging les bienséances, simply because society cannot divorce itself from her, whereas it refuses to accept the courtisane on stage, as it seeks to deny her very existence. Furthermore, the femme adultère is depicted as the lowest of the low, worse than the fille de joie, because, Houssaye reasons, she perjures her marriage vow before God and injures not only herself but also her family, whereas the latter generally only injures herself.

Illustrative of the courtisane descendants on the Parisian stage, La baronne and Mlle Trente-Six Vertus, demonstrate an augmented horror and moral outrage over this particular type of social outcast. The intensity of the moral indignation is attributable to the fact that in many ways the courtisane popularly signified the luxury and corruption of the Second Empire. France needed a culprit on which to pin the blame after the defeat at Sedan in 1870-1^{and} the courtisane provided a ready made scapegoat. Republican France would no longer tolerate her presence. Consider the following statement from Paul Adam and Gabriel Mourey's L'automne (1893), in which the courtisane is described as an emblem of waste and financial ruin:

Oui, cette fille a dépensé, des industriels ont gagné, ont accru leur commerce, des ouvriers ont travaillé pour eux et recueilli des salaires. La courtisane, dans notre société moderne, c'est la machine à désagréger le capital. Triste moyen de répartition. 81

Houssaye's point with regard to the adulterous wife as portrayed on the French stage, is a valid one, and may be substantiated by brief comment on the final category, based on the woman alienated from respectability; a category which may be illustrated by reference to Octave Feuillet's Le sphinx, first performed at the Théâtre Français 23 March 1874, and Sardou's Odette, first performed at the Vaudeville, 17 November 1881.

Feuillet's Le sphinx is a clear condemnation of the adulterous wife, whose trespass of the marriage vow injures innocent parties. The siren-figure, Blanche de Chelles, is described as,

Une de ces femmes, intéressant produit de notre haute civilisation, qui naissent mûres pour ainsi dire, qui, par suite peut-être d'une éducation fâcheuse, sont blasées avant d'avoir vécu - et pour le fruit défendu, même avant qu'elles y aient goûté, n'a plus de goût...à moins qu'il ne soit relevé par quelque saveur extra-ordinaire. 82

She demands 'un amour hardi, singulier...quelque chose d'héroïque ou de criminel...la tentation de grands dévouements ou de grandes perfidies'. The price to be paid for such dangerous living is suicide. Whatever harm the weak, male victim suffers at the hands of such a woman, ultimately her own self-destruction and alienation is greater than any damage she may inflict (Houssaye's Lucie, being one possible exception). Blanche is a veritable incarnation of Praz's diabolical femme fatale, preying on her male victims out of revenge for the submissive role society has allotted her. She seduces her victims by means of a 'parole', 'sourire', 'regard'; a range of seductive vocabulary, which has an ancestry in the passions of the classical Racinian tragedy.

Again, Bernhardt played the 'good' role, the injured Berthe de Savigny, while Mlle Croizet had to struggle with the detestable Blanche. Bernhardt's descriptions of the play's rehearsals indicate how easy it was (particularly given her self-

confessed resolution that there should be two principal roles), for Croizet's femme fatale role to be upstaged.⁸³ In the third act when the lovers meet by moonlight and venture a kiss (a daring move for the Comédie Française, Bernhardt exclaims), but whose love-making is interrupted by the injured wife, Bernhardt as the latter, was determined to have flattering moonlight effects for her entry too. In spite of Perrin's objection and insistence that Croizette, in the title role as the 'sphinx' should have the 'principaux effets', Sarah had her own way and her own moonlight.

Sarcey in particular noted that Bernhardt's performance assumed an unusual degree of prominence and that as the outraged but forgiving wife,^{she} had all the sympathy.⁸⁴ In an outfit described in Le Figaro as highly evocative of a sixteenth-century châtelaine,⁸⁵ her appearance, physique, voice and gestures, signified the martyred wife. Opposite her, Croizette as the 'femme dans le corps d'une sirène',⁸⁶ was the demon to Sarah's angel, though this she used to her advantage in certain scenes, notably her death scene, the realism of which greatly attracted the aristocratic audiences and made it a major talking point in the city. Sarcey could not guess at how she turned her face a greenish hue and went through all manner of convulsions which horrified the first night audience.⁸⁷ He did not warm to her realism, or what he considered to be a general misconception of the role as a courtisane rather than as 'une grande dame égarée', whereas Wolff in Le Gaulois, reflected the more general opinion that rated it as one of her finest moments :

Cette scène comptera dans sa carrière d'artiste, malgré l'exagération où elle se laisse aller. Le vrai au théâtre n'est pas toujours le beau : ici c'est la mort dans toute sa hideuse réalité. Les hommes en sont épouvantés et les femmes jettent des cris de terreur...Le réalisme est poussé à un degré inouï; l'impression est pénible, trop pénible; le public, haletant, voudrait crier à Mlle Croizette de mourir avec moins d'effort; on voudrait quitter sa stalle et s'élancer à son secours...Cette agonie est effroyable à voir comme une exécution capitale sur la place de la Roquette. 88

The marked popularity of Bernhardt and the unpopularity of Croizette, was even more pronounced amongst the reactions of English audiences to performances by the two actresses, a fact which puzzled Sarcey, and which the editor of The

Times attempted to explain; an explanation which the French critic reproduces

as follows, in the review of Le demi-monde, as previously cited :

Nous croyons fournir à M. Sarcey les explications qu'il demande. Chez une actrice, à défaut de génie, car le génie est une force telle qu'il prime toute autre considération, chez une actrice, ce que le public cherche et voit surtout, c'est la femme. C'est à la femme qu'il veut s'intéresser. Aussi se laisse-t-il plus particulièrement séduire à ces qualités charmantes qui sont la grâce propre de la femme : 'fragility', 'physical delicacy', une taille svelte, une voix douce, tout ce qui évoque à l'esprit des images de pureté, de tendresse, de faiblesse même, de besoin de protection, tout ce qui, en un mot distingue la femme de l'homme. L'ampleur de Mlle Croizette, une certaine rudesse de la voix dans les notes basses, un je ne sais quel air d'indépendance, la certitude où elle semble être qu'elle peut toujours compter sur elle-même, tout cela est pour beaucoup dans la froideur témoignée à Mlle Croizette et dont s'étonne M. Sarcey.

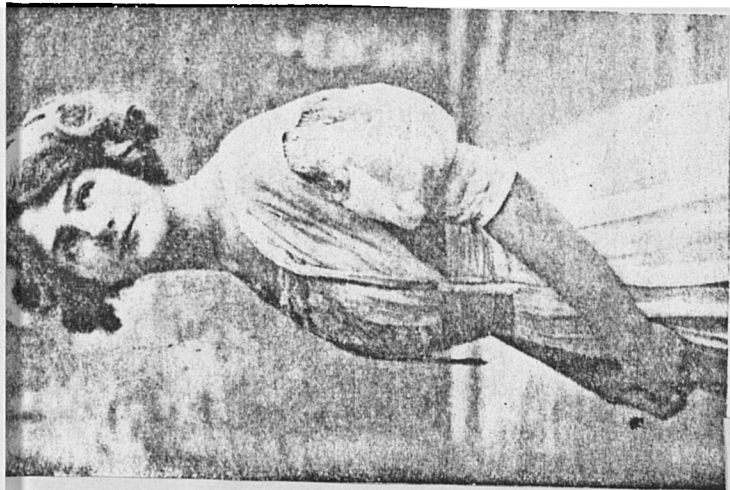
Les caractères que nous avons marqués comme étant spécialement ceux de la femme se rencontrent au contraire chez Mme Broisat et Mlle Sarah Bernhardt, et surtout, à un degré éminent, chez cette dernière. Chez Mlle Sarah Bernhardt ces dons s'unissent à une étrangeté d'allures, à une originalité de physionomie qui ajoutent aux grâces purement féminines un piquant tout particulier. Il y a dans la façon dont elle reçoit son amant, le bandit Hernani, une tendresse si caressante, si enlaçante ('clinging'), une joie si délicieuse à lui avouer son amour, un plaisir si visible à toucher son bras d'homme, à s'abriter sous ce bras comme entraînée par le sentiment physique de la protection qu'il lui assure: et quand tout cela finit par s'exprimer en paroles, c'est une musique merveilleuse, la musique de la voix la plus tendre, la plus douce, la plus mélodieuse que nous ayons jamais entendue sur la scène; et nous nous expliquons alors aisément l'enthousiasme du public anglais pour cette actrice, à laquelle l'épithète de conquérant ('winning') semble pouvoir justement s'appliquer. (Quarante ans, 1, pp.372-3)

The criticism points towards a general difference in images of womanhood, and the interaction of those images with the physique of the actress. According to an article in the Strand Magazine, 1910,⁸⁹ the contrast or gulf between the English and continental views of the ideal woman, was strongly marked. The English ideal involved a demure and lady-like deportment, with little recourse to bodily or facial movement. The continental ideal was dynamic, expressive, conveying emotions through a wide range of body and facial gesture, a difference which went as far as to affect acting styles, as is indicated in the following continental view of English actresses in musical comedy :

Can it be that musical comedy is responsible for some of what I can only call gestural stupidity? You should see what some foreign critics say of the ladies in your musical comedy.

There is, for instance, Mr Alan Dale, the American critic, who writes :-

'You watch these lovely, languorous English girls with afternoon tea voices and you are bored. You don't want to go again. Every one of these 'gells'



"Won't you, please—for me?"



"My dear, I was perfectly astounded!"



"Oh, what was I to do?"

The English (above) and Continental (below) views on the 'art of gesture', from

the Strand Magazine, 1910



"Won't you, please—for me?"



"My dear, I was perfectly astounded!"



"Oh, what was I to do?"

looks like a perfect lady brought up to say, 'I'll take a lump of sugar in my tea and a little cream. Thank you so much'. Her attitudes are full of gaucherie. She has, as the French say, two left hands'. 90

On the other hand, objections were made to continental actresses by English critics on the grounds of unladylike use of expansive gesture, as in the following description of Duse :

Gleaming, coal-black eyes, a pale face which reflects every shade of emotion and yet which is, perhaps, most fascinating when it is rigidly set, hands and arms which gesticulate, to English notions, a little excessively. 91

Reception of foreign drama by English audiences, therefore, might well be hampered by a cultural conflict of ideal images of women; the connotations of femininity in the source culture, undergoing a transposition on reception in the target culture.

To return to the plays, and the final example in this chapter. Whereas Feuillet takes the moment of the fall from grace as the main interest for his dramatic plot, Sardou in Odette, traces what happens to the outcast after she has fallen from the ranks of the respectable. Odette, who falls after her marriage, uses her husband's name to survive in society :

Il y a demain bal à Ville franche, sur le Trenton américain. (Elle prend une carte dans une coupe.) Voici mon invitation, au nom de la Comtesse de Clermont-Latour. Si je m'appelais Madame de n'importe qui, je ne l'aurais pas. La nuance est considérable et vaut mieux que l'argent que vous m'offrez. 92

Odette's relegation to the 'bastard society', is again a direct consequence of the Code which empowered the husband with the right to cast out his wife caught defiling hearth and home. The play offers some criticism of the double standard of morality and criticism of the limitations of the marriage institution for women, but these are not as strongly voiced as the damage done to the family; the wages of sin visited upon the heads of the next generation.

The original production was a great success, involving a fine cast, particularly in the leading roles played by M. Depuis and Mlle Pierson. Barbey d'Aurevilly records that at the end of the first act the audiences were so overwhelmed they

forgot to clap (Théâtre contemporain, pp.215-224). He praises Mlle Pierson for her superb acting, which helped overcome a weakness in the play, namely, the notion that after fourteen years of a debauched lifestyle, a woman such as Odette should want to see her daughter again, and demand her rights as a mother.

This actress, like Réjane in Sapho, was also capable of manipulating the emotional response of her audiences :

Rien n'est beau et brisant comme le jeu divin de Blanche Pierson, dans cette scène! (i.e. scene between mother and daughter) A-t-elle fait verser assez de larmes! En sortant du spectacle, tous les yeux étaient mouillés encore. (Théâtre contemporain, p.223)

This final agonizing scene, coupled with ^{the} off-stage drowning of Odette, guaranteed an ultimately sympathetic response and was generally considered by the critics to be one of the play's finest scenes. Jean Richepin noted that Mlle Pierson had a complicated task in showing the two opposing natures of the 'courtisane' and the mother, though considered the two admirably combined,⁹³ and Vitu felt that she carried off a role 'affreusement ingrat' with 'un talent vraiment supérieur.'⁹⁴ Only Sarcey was more critical, levelling against Mlle Pierson the criticism he applied to Mme Hading; that of being too perfect and not sufficiently moving in her portrayal of passion.⁹⁵

Adapted the following year for London's Haymarket,⁹⁶ the fashionable audiences crowded in to see the play that had reputedly drawn more tears from its fourth act than any other in recent stage history. They were somewhat disappointed by a play that contained so many 'frivolities', had its principal actress absent for a good half of the performance and indulged in marital legalities, alien to English codes and customs. 'Little people are given more prominence than the big ones', complained the Era⁹⁷ and regretted that Helena Modjeska, as the errant wife was not more in evidence. Interestingly, this Polish born actress chosen for the principal role was the only character to retain her 'Frenchness', all the others being given English names. The Times wisely pointed out that this justified Mme Modjeska's slight accent, as well as 'gratifying the patriotic and domestic

instincts', of the audience.⁹⁸ Significantly, it was also considered more fitting, when played before English audiences, to have the errant foreigner retire to a nunnery, rather than martyred in an act of suicide,⁹⁹ which again points to a less sympathetic attitude than was evident in the original French production.

The study of the courtisane on the Parisian stage of the last century, and the hybrid circle of female social outcasts, leads me to conclude that comparatively little is said on behalf of her plight. There is hardly any understanding of this alienated group, which is given the dramatic function of a public warning. Yet, at the same time there is a paradoxical prurient fascination for the woman that the public is warned against. She is the 'guilty' woman, 'que notre morale réproouve et que notre goût recherche', writes playwright, Jules Case, 'la femme qui, dans notre tradition dramatique, surexcite davantage l'imagination et les sens, n'est ni la calme fiancée, ni la vierge timide. Elle n'est point pure. Elle est généralement adultère'.¹⁰⁰

The figure of the erring wife or mother, such as Odette, was to become a more prominent and fully developed figure, in the social drama of the 1890's and new century (an image which will figure largely, and in depth, in the third section of this study), while gradually, and chiefly owing to the increasing wave of naturalism in the 1880's, the prejudicial assumptions surrounding the female outcast were to be exposed and a more enlightened argument presented on behalf of the fallen woman.

Notes to Chapter 1 : The 'Courtisane'

1. Joanna Richardson, The Courtesans (London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), introduction, p.3. Subsequent references are given in the text. Richardson, amongst others, has adopted the English spelling, 'courtesan'. However, in current English usage, the word has tended to be used synonymously with 'whore', which loses the flavour and specificity here intended. For this reason, the French spelling courtisane is retained throughout.
2. Braun (Baltimore, Maryland : John Hopkins Press, 1947). See also, 'The Courtesan on the French Stage', Andrew de Ternant, Westminster Review, 154 (1900), 671-684.
3. Translated by Angus Davidson, second edition (London : Oxford University Press, 1970). Subsequent references are given in the text.

4. L'aventurière, in Théâtre complet, 8 vols (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1889-1895), I, act IV, 2.p.245.
5. Ibid., II.3.p.190.
6. La Presse, 27 March 1848, p.2.
7. Quarante ans de théâtre, 8 vols (Paris : Bibliothèque des Annales, 1900-1902), 5, p.15. All subsequent references will be to this edition.
8. Théâtre contemporain : 1881-1883, dernière série (Paris : Stock, 1896), p.135. Subsequent references are given in the text.
9. Ma double vie, 2 vols (Paris : Charpentier, 1923), II, pp.136 - 139.
10. T. Edgar Pemberton, The Life and Writings of T.W. Robertson (London : Richard Bentley, 1892), p.241.
11. Ibid. The play became increasingly popular and was later revived at the St. James's theatre, under the management of Hare and Kendal, with Mrs Kendal playing a popular Mrs Pinchbeck.
12. 'The Lady of the Camellias', in Mythologies, translated by Annette Lavers (London : Granada, 1973), pp.103-5 (p.104).
13. See Roger J.B. Clark's introduction to La dame aux camélias (London : Oxford University Press, 1972). The play had also encountered difficulties in censorship which had delayed its production, and caused much curiosity and speculation prior to performance. Only after the revolution and the appointment of the new minister, Duc de Morny, was the play allowed to be performed.
14. Dumas wanted the popular Virginie Déjazet to play the role, but she refused. Although she liked the part, she found it incongruous with her own image and repertoire of roles, as she explained to Dumas :

For me to play the role, you would have to change to a Louis XV setting, give me some verses to sing, and let me marry my lover at the end. I wept too much in reading your play to want to change it.

(From Dumas's 'Notes' on La dame aux camélias, reproduced in Marvin Carlson The French Stage in the Nineteenth Century (Metuchen, N.J. : Scarecrow Press, 1972), p.121.)
15. La Presse, 10 February 1852, p.1.
16. Ibid., p.2.
17. Ibid.
18. Clark (1972), p.46.
19. See Carlson, pp.120-1.
20. Clark lists the following actresses who have subsequently played the role :

Rose Chéri, Aimée Desclée... and Aimée Tessandier, Sarah Bernhardt, Cécile Sorel, Blanche Dufrêne (who killed herself because she felt that she was unable to do the part justice), Ida Rubinstein, Ludmilla Pitoëff, Alice Tissot, Marie Bell, Claudia Victrix and Edwige Feuillère...on the screen, the role has tempted such stars as Norma Talmadge, Yvonne Printemps and, most memorably, Greta Garbo. (p.46)

21. Bernhardt in L'art du théâtre (Paris : Nilsson, 1923), recounts an amusing anecdote about a mother's opinion of La Traviata, the opera, which she considered fit for the ears of her daughter, and the play, which she did not allow her to see. 'La musique corrige le réalisme de la pièce', she argued, 'Ma fille ne se rendait pas compte que ce qu'elle entendait chanter pouvait se parler'. (p.185).
An English translation of the play was finally undertaken by the American actress Matilda Heron, who was successful in the role in the 1850's, in her native country, and had the play licenced for performance at the Gaiety, London, February 1883.
22. 13 June 1881, p.11.
23. 1 July 1881, p.57.
24. The Times, 13 June 1881, p.11. Details of the death scene as played by Bernhardt, including stills from the silent film made in 1911-2, are given in Gerda Taranow's The Art Within the Legend (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1972), chapter 2, 'Pantomime'. Subsequent references to Taranow will be given in the text.
25. See Our Theatre in the Nineties, I, pp.148 - 154, for Shaw's famous comparison of Duse and Bernhardt, including reference to their respective Marguerites.
26. For a review favourable to Bernhardt, see Speaker, 16 June 1900, p.299, which looks back at the two Marguerites.
27. A.B. Walkley Speaker, 27 May 1893, p.601.
28. Jules Lemaître, Impressions de théâtre, dixième série (Paris : Nouvelle Bibliothèque Littéraire, 1898), p.163.
29. Arthur Symons, Eleonora Duse (London, New York : Benjamin Blom, 1969), p.11.
30. Though a success at the box office, as an adaptation it betrayed Dumas's original, in a de-sentimentalisation of Marguerite and theatrical trickery worthy of Scribe, notably as Armand's father turns out to be her seducer and the father of her child. To succeed, the drama must establish Marguerite's redemption through the purity of her love, and not even Bernhardt with her talent, could have drawn tears and sympathy from an audience, in this version.
31. Carlson, p.123, claims that for a time, Les filles de marbre was even more popular than La dame aux camélias, and Barrière followed the increasing success through with Les parisiens (1854).
32. La Presse, 25 May 1855, p.2.
33. Les filles de marbre (Paris : Michel Lèvy, 1853), IV.4.p.54.
34. La Presse 25 May 1855, p.2.
35. Le demi-monde, in Théâtre complet, 7 vols (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1885-1890), II, Act II⁴⁹.pp.100-1.
36. Carlson, p.215.
37. Quarante ans, 5, p.216.
38. 25 March 1855, p.5.
39. La Presse, 27 March 1855, p.2.
40. Quarante ans, I, pp.370-1.

41. La Presse, 22 July 1885, p.2.
42. Le Figaro, 22 July 1855, p.2.
43. Our Theatre in the Nineties, III, pp.168-9.
44. Les faux ménages (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1882), I.6. pp.25-6. Hereafter referenced in the text.
45. J.J. Weiss, Le théâtre et les mœurs (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1889), pp.218-9.
46. Arsène Houssaye, preface to Mlle Trente-Six Vertus (Paris : E. Dentu, 1873), pp.12-13. Subsequent references to Houssaye's preface and play, will be given in the text.
47. Effecting a move from a classical to a contemporary repertoire was a difficult change to bring about; to counter audience expectations and role stereotyping. Rachel for example, hesitated some months before effecting such a change and undertaking the title role in Adrienne Lecouvreur, whose historical eighteenth century salon setting made a suitable 'bridging' drama.
48. L'art du théâtre, pp.112-114.
49. La Presse, 11 January 1869, p.2.
50. Le Figaro, 9 January 1869, p.3.
51. Le Temps, 11 January 1869, p.2.
52. Sapho, in, Théâtre, 3 vols (Paris : Charpentier, 1880-1899), III, act II.s.11.
53. For details, see Carlson, p.199.
54. Le Figaro, 19 December 1886, p.2.
55. 19 December 1885, p.2.
56. Le Temps, 21 December 1885, p.2.
57. Dramatic Criticism 1902-3 (London : Eveleigh Nash, 1904), pp.259-261 (p.260).
58. *Ibid.*, p.259.
59. 'Réjane as Sapho', in Dramatic Criticism 1900-1 (London : Greening, 1902), pp.238-242 (p.238).
60. The Times, 18 June 1901, p.10. The implied affinity is all the more striking if one considers that Rodin's sculpture was inspired by his own notorious domestic irregularities and tenacious mistress Camille Claudel.
61. Grein, Dramatic Criticism 1900-1, p.242.
62. Arthur Symonds, Star, 18 June 1901, p.1.
63. For details of Beardsley's drawings and other portraits, see John Stokes, 'A kind of beauty: Réjane in London', in Themes in Drama, 6 (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1984), 97-119.
64. Star, 18 June 1901, p.1.
65. Dramatic Criticism 1902-3, p.96.

66. Ibid., p.97.
67. 'An Actress and a Play', collected in Around Theatres (London, Rupert Hart Davis, 1953), pp.205-7. Hereafter referred to in the text as Around Theatres.
68. Andrew Ternant 'The Courtesan on the French Stage', Westminster Review, 154 (1900), 671 -684 (p.677).
69. Le Gaulois, 25 November 1871, p.4.
70. La baronne (Paris : Alphonse Lemerre, 1871),I.6.p.36.
71. Ibid., I.6.p.34.
72. La Presse 27 November 1871, p.2.
73. Le Temps 27 November 1871, p.2.
74. Le Figaro 25 November 1871, p.3.
75. Le Temps 27 November 1871, p.2.
76. 5 May 1873, p.3.
77. La Presse, 5 May 1873, p.2.
78. Le Temps 5 May 1873, p.2.
79. Le Figaro, 5 May 1873, p.3.
80. 4 May 1873, p.3.
81. L'automne (Paris : E. Kolb, 1893), II.6.p.71.
82. Le sphinx, in Théâtre complet, 5 vols (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1897-8),IV, act I. s.5. pp.17-8.
83. For details see Ma double vie,II, 34-7.
84. Le Temps 30 March 1874, p.2.
85. 25 March 1874, p.1.
86. La Presse, 30 March 1874, p.1.
87. Le Temps, 30 March 1874, p.2.
88. Le Gaulois, 25 March 1874, p.1.
89. 'The Art of Gesture': 'The Continental View', by Carmen Turia, 'The English View' by Miss Lily Elsie (December 1910), 723-728.
90. Ibid., p.726.
91. Review by A.B. Walkley, Black and White, 3 June 1893, p.681.
92. Odette, in Théâtre complet, 15 vols (Paris : Albin Michel, 1934 - 1961), VI, act III.s.8.p.387.
93. Le Gaulois 18 November 1881, p.1.
94. Le Figaro, 18 November 1881, p.2.

95. Le Temps 21 November 1881, p.2.
96. The play was produced by the Bancrofts, though who exactly was responsible for the adaptation is uncertain. The Times, 26 April 1882, p.7, declared it to be anonymous, whilst George Rowell's checklist in 'Sardou on the English stage' Theatre Research International, 2, no.1 (1976) 33-44 (p.43), attributes it to Clement Scott. This would certainly comply with strong defences of the play in Scott's June issue of the Theatre, 363-4, 372-5.
97. 29 April 1882, p.6.
98. 26 April 1882, p.7.
99. See George Rowell 'Sardou on the English stage', p.40.
100. 'La courtisane', Nouvelle Revue, 102 (1896), 869-873 (p.870).

Chapter 2 : The Saintly Sinner

The dramatization of the courtisane on the French stage invited the question of redemption; a topical issue which became a popular subject for dramatization in the social drama of the late nineteenth century in both England and France. As London and Parisian stages debated the case of the fallen woman, a number of Magdalen figures began to appear in the drama, as signifiers of the penitent sinner. The promiscuous, wealthy, courtisane, signifying bankruptcy of hearts and purses, might conceivably never find cause to repent of her immoral and parasitic life style, thereby augmenting the degree of culpability in the eyes of the puritanical middle classes and negating sympathy and forgiveness. However, the woman who is victimized, or seduced, as opposed to the woman who victimizes and seduces, may invite sympathy. Whilst subject to the unjust prejudicial attitudes generated by the double standard of sexual morality, a state of contrition and repentance, may nevertheless result in a transformation from sinner to saint.

A comparative study of the Magdalen figures which populated the London and Parisian stages from the 1860's to the beginning of the 1900's, will therefore indicate the extent to which redemption might be achieved and the nature of such a redemption. Essentially, the predominant type of Magdalen figure, is the archetypal penitent sinner, whose admission of sin and guilt results in an ultimate reaffirmation of the double standard of sexual morality. However, the figure is also used, in some drama, to offer a more radical challenge to those moral values and works towards the exposition of the mythology of the 'pure' woman.

Rédemption is the title of Octave Feuillet's five act comedy (plus prologue), first performed at the Vaudeville, 19 October 1860. It depicts a 'saintly sinner', in the form of the actress Madeleine, who is tired of the empty glamour of her profession, and rejects her would-be wealthy protecteurs in an attempt to win the 'true' love of Maurice Feder, who spends most of the play resisting his attraction for the actress, hoping for a spiritual love, instead of a base passion. The role of Madeleine was played by Mlle Fargueil, who had already connotatively allied

herself with the woman with a past in the roles of Pauline and Marco. The role of Madeleine was endowed with a greater degree of sympathy than either Pauline or Marco; a sympathy generated both by Madeleine's general repentant attitude and the specific device of a suicide ritual in the last act of the play. In order to prove the purity of her love, Madeleine drinks a glass of poison, or rather believes she does, for Maurice had previously removed the poison. Her ritualistic 'death' thereby constitutes a ceremony of purgation; redemption via renunciation of her way of life and the possibility of a spiritual love.

Although ^{the play} encouraged the talents of a new actor from the provinces, M. Ribes, in the part of Maurice, it was Mlle Fargueil's talent which redeemed the play from pure melodrama. 'La reine des damnés', Paul ^{de} Saint-Victor described her, ¹ while Jouvin, amongst others, singled out the scene in which she eavesdrops on a particularly unpleasant conversation about herself, as one of the finest demonstrations of her art :

le comble de l'art, chez Mlle Fargueil, dans cette scène du paravent, où, sans voix, sans geste, elle fait passer sur son visage toute la gamme des passions, c'est d'avoir masqué la comédienne par la femme. Assurément, cette pantomime et ces jeux de physionomie ont été patiemment étudiés devant le miroir; mais cette fois l'illusion est complète, et l'oeil, ne distingue plus entre l'art et l'inspiration. 2

The rehabilitation of the victim who is more sinned against than sinning, is the theme of Les idées de Mme Aubray, by Dumas fils, a four act comédie, first performed at the Gymnase, 16 March, 1867. The play is a testing ground for Mme Aubray's advanced ideas, which include the forgiveness of sins and the re-establishment of the contrite sinner in society. When her own son wishes to marry the repentant woman with a past, Jeanine, she betrays her ideals but subsequently relents and accepts Jeanine as her daughter. The acceptance has a Christian base in the predominant sense of welcoming back the stray sheep to the fold - thereby encompassing connotations of sacrifice and establishing a code of morality based on the teachings of the Bible :

Eh bien, elle est venue, la lutte; je l'ai accompli, le sacrifice; et je remercie Dieu d'avoir été choisie pour tenter la réhabilitation de la femme. J'aurai la

joie d'avoir été la première. 3

Sarcey was critical of Dumas for whitewashing the character of Jeanine. He argued that nowhere in the play do we have a sense of her as a woman who has sinned and borne a child; 'Elle est devenue mère, et n'a jamais été maîtresse (Quarante ans, 5, p.260).

A repentant, and paradoxically 'virginal' heroine, plus strong religious overtones, combined to make an unpalatable subject (particularly in its advocacy of forgiveness), acceptable, though it still met with resistance from audiences and though successful, never, as Sarcey indicated, became popular (Quarante ans, 5, p.303). Among the critics, Wolff welcomed a play that offered a new kind of theatre and was a relief from the 'jongleries théâtrales, des tours de passe-passe exécutés avec beaucoup d'adresse, et de toutes les hontes qu'on étale sur la scène sous prétexte de débiter une fausse morale qui a fait son temps'. ⁴ Critics generally conceded the talent of the two principal actresses, Mme Pasca and Mlle Delaporte, as Mme Aubray and Jeanine, respectively. However, Ulbach, reviewing for Le Temps, criticised Mme Pasca's initial revolt for being too harsh, though had enthusiastic praise for Mlle Delaporte's sympathetic qualities, being 'tout simplement admirable de vérité, de naturel, de timidité exquise, de pureté et de force voilée'. ⁵ In La Presse it was Mlle Delaporte's confession scene which was singled out as most touching and moving. ⁶

Death, used as a theatrical device for sympathy, in terms of redemption, constituted a sign of a woman's admission of her guilt, the acceptance of her punishment and therefore ultimate re-affirmation of society's rejection of the fallen woman. Such was the argument of François Coppée's L'abandonnée, performed at the Gymnase, 13 November 1871. As a two act play written in verse, and set in the earlier time of 1835, its style at once softened the unpleasant thematic presentation of the abandoned woman. Louise, played by Mlle Vannoy, is seduced and subsequently abandoned by her lover Julien. The first act, reminiscent of Murger's Vie de Bohème, leaves the lovers on the threshold of a newly found love. The second act takes place twelve years later, during which passage of time, Julien, having abandoned Louise, has worked hard to become a successful doctor, now on the verge of marriage

to a wealthy heiress, whilst Louise has been driven into prostitution, as a means of survival, and is now on the brink of death in the hospital in which Julien works.

The play attempts to produce a 'balanced' argument. In the lengthy explanation scene between Julien and Louise (II.6.), the former's justification for his abandoning Louise is argued along the lines of filial duty, an argument which would have won full support from the bourgeois audience. Yet, Julien is also full of remorse and self-blame, citing himself as 'le seul auteur de sa souffrance'. This transference of guilt to the male is a significant factor in establishing a sympathetic attitude towards Louise's plight. Vindication of Louise's character is also indicated by the contrast between her behaviour and that of other frivolous grisettes in the first act, and by the care the nurse at the hospital in the second act takes of her, whilst stating, that as a rule, she has no time for such women. In short, this is once more the world of Marguerite and Armand, in which class conflict and an irresolvable spiritual love fatally collide.

The moral of Coppée's play is therefore unambiguously clear. Death is the penalty exacted by a society which may be prepared to overlook the past, if the 'sinner' has repented of her ways, but cannot condone a future.

The critics were not kind to the play which they felt to be slight and unoriginal, or to the playwright, because of the pessimistic choice of subject matter, or to Mlle Vannoy for her shortcomings in the role. While the hospital scenes, conducted in sentimental tirades of alexandrines, reduced the women in the audience to tears, critic François Oswald questioned the necessity of making a moral point out of what he described as naked realism and cruel truth, worried that the staging of such scenes in the realist vogue, might logically lead to on stage dissection of real bodies.⁷ Jouvin found Mlle Vannoy lacking in grace,⁸ and Sarcey who was thoroughly bored, and contemptuous of those critics who had paid tribute to the play out of respect for its verse composition, was most dissatisfied with Mlle Vannoy's performance, finding her physique incompatible with the role :

Mlle Vannoy dont le talent, comme la santé, a quelque chose de robuste, n'était pas trop à sa place dans ces affectations de mièvreries phthisiques. Elle y a peu réussi. Je doute qu'elle s'acclimate au Gymnase. Elle est plutôt faite pour jouer les héroïnes persécutées des grands dâmes, à la Porte-Saint-Martin ou au Châtelet.⁹

By contrast, a more advanced and radical argument is pursued by Dumas in Denise, first performed at the Théâtre Français, 19 January 1885, which advances the theory put forward in the earlier Les idées de Mme Aubray. Denise, the daughter of poor, but honest parents, is courted by the wealthy Comte André de Bardannes. André's sister, Marthe, is in love with the profligate Fernand de Thauzette, who in the past has seduced and abandoned Denise, leaving her to conceal the birth of an illegitimate child. Denise ultimately reveals her guilty secret and sacrifices her love for André in order to protect Marthe from Fernand. Ultimately André repays Denise's sacrifice by agreeing to marriage, in the full knowledge of her past.

The subject of the play was therefore a shocking one. As Sarcey exclaimed :

Il n'y a guerre d'idée qui soit plus antipathique à un public français que celle-là; il n'y en a point qui choque davantage les préjugés du monde. Interrogez-vous, vous qui me lisez et descendez au fond de votre cœur : y-a-t-il une perspective qui vous semble plus désobligeante, qui vous inspire un sentiment plus invincible de répulsion? N'être pas le premier dans le cœur d'une femme, on s'y résout encore;... mais la possession semble imprimer une marque autrement indélébile; personne ne se résigne à n'arriver que le second. (Quarante ans, 5, p.302)

The danger Sarcey senses in trying to impose an idea contrary to the opinion of the public, is recognised by Dumas in his 'Notes sur Denise', which justifies his thesis on the basis of Christian forgiveness. Though less obtrusive than in Les idées de Mme Aubray, the biblical preaching of redemption is still fundamental to Dumas's reasoning. The arguments for forgiveness and rehabilitation rest on the raisonneur, Thouvenin, whose understanding of social behaviour and moral codes, must guide André from his denial of ever marrying Denise, if she is an 'impure' woman, to an unconditional acceptance of marriage. In IV.3. Thouvenin argues at length on behalf of Denise, exposing André's own hypocrisy in judging her by one standard, whilst allowing himself to indulge in the double standard of sexual morality (André had previously been the lover of Mme de Thauzette), generated by a lax and decadent society. He argues the case for the purgation of sin :

Quand un homme a reçu d'une femme qu'il aime et dont il est aimé une confession aussi loyale et aussi touchante que celle que vous avez reçue tout à l'heure, quand

cet homme et cette femme ont pleuré ensemble sur la faute commise, cette faute est à jamais lavée. Elle n'est plus que le point de départ de la réhabilitation de l'une et de la magnanimité de l'autre. Il y aura désormais entre ces deux êtres un lien d'âme et de cœur que chaque jour rivera et fortifiera de plus en plus. (Théâtre, VII, p.235)

Sarcey recognizes Dumas's astuteness in having secured Coquelin to play the role of the raisonneur :

c'est que Dumas avait besoin pour plaider sa thèse d'un homme qui eût de l'autorité, l'oreille du public, de la force et de l'adresse en même temps; qui pût tantôt manier un poids de 500 kilogrammes et tantôt escamoter une simple muscade; il lui fallait Coquelin. (Quarante ans, 5, p.318)

Equally necessary, was an actress capable of winning an audience in her interpretation of a role, likely to inspire hostility, given the ultimate conclusion of the play. Again, Dumas was fortunate in having Mme Bartet to play Denise, she and Mme Pierson, playing Mme de Thauzette, mother of the profligate Fernand, repeating a successful partnership established in L'étrangère. Denise was one of Bartet's greatest roles. Connotatively her own image as the well-behaved, loyal member of the leading French theatre ¹⁰(unlike her wilful contemporary Bernhardt), incited an essential aura of respect and propriety in her interpretation of the role; necessary for gaining the audience's sympathy. Described as the 'incarnation de la femme moderne au point de vue esthétique', ¹¹and christened by others as 'la divine Bartet', her beauty likewise conspired in favour of a sympathetic hearing.

Dumas pays her the highest tribute in recognizing that if the audience ultimately accepted the marriage between Denise and André, then it was Bartet's achievement:

Tout ce que le rôle de Denise contenait de dangereux était sauvé d'avance par la distinction, la réserve, la loyauté, en même temps que par l'infailible science de la comédienne qui en était chargée. Une intonation équivoque, un geste vulgaire, une robe dont la coupe ou la couleur eussent fait lever une seule lorgnette et demander le nom de la couturière, le personnage était immédiatement compromis, incriminé, déclassé; sa faute était attribuée à une autre cause que celle qu'il donnait, la sympathie du spectateur lui faisait immédiatement défaut. Mais quand une femme a le goût, la tenue, la discrétion, avec la voix et le regard de mademoiselle Bartet, le secret qu'elle cache ne peut être que touchant, respectable, sacré. Mademoiselle Bartet rendait inévitable, irrésistible, l'absolution de cette faute. Elle a eu dans la scène de l'aveu deux ou trois cris où l'âme dégagée de toute souillure jaillissait pour ainsi dire, transfigurée et transparente, dans toute son innocence première. Si le public a donné son consentement au mariage de M. de Bardannes avec Denis c'est à mademoiselle Bartet que la pièce le doit. (Théâtre, VII, p.254)

Dumas's play was a success, indicated in its popularity at the Théâtre Français,¹² and that success was due, in the main, to Bartet's winning performance. Sarcey was happy to report that on this occasion Mlle Bartet showed none of 'ce jeu saccadé et nerveux' that had proved irritating in some of her previous performances,¹³ and the review for Le Gaulois described her success as a 'victoire mouillée', which reached its greatest heights in the third act as 'les yeux deviennent des robinets qui s'ouvrent à sa parole'.¹⁴ Vitu, in Le Figaro, suggested that her performance might be even better once she learnt to control her own feelings and was able to moderate her energies, keeping them in reserve 'pour frapper un grand coup',¹⁵ though all were agreed that she made an ideal and sympathetic Denise, suitable for conveying Dumas's thesis.

The concept of spiritual love is an important factor in the process of redemption and connotatively allied with a sense of Christian forgiveness. This is explicitly dramatized in Rodolphe Darzens's L'amante du Christ, first performed at Antoine's experimental Théâtre Libre, 19 October 1888, and one of the few non-naturalist plays in Antoine's repertoire :

Avec La fin de Lucie Pellegrin, de Paul Alexis, sorte d'eau forte de la vie montmartre, qui souleva l'indignation, on donnait L'amante du Christ, un acte en vers, de Rodolphe Darzens, conçu dans la plus formule parnassienne et, traduit de l'Italien Verga, l'un des chefs de l'école vériste sicilienne, Chevalerie rustique, fort beau drame, sauvage et coloré, mal accueilli par le public.

La pièce est sifflée copieusement, et bien des gens furent surpris quelques années plus tard, en la retrouvant enrichie d'une musique de Mascagni qui a fait le tour du monde.¹⁶

The subject of the biblical Magdalen story and its treatment of the transformation from an erotic to a spiritual based love of Christ, was the cause of its adverse reception.¹⁷ A prefaced note to the play insists that, 'le mot amante doit être pris au sens mystique, et non comme indication nécessaire d'un amour matériel'.¹⁸ However, the opening scenes depicting the unreformed Magdalen, portray a woman who possesses all the magnetism of the seductress; 'Personne, lorsque je le veux, ne me résiste, Et je ne connais point de borne à mon pouvoir' (scene 6, p.39). Her love for Christ is, at first, a continuation of physical desire, but through His love and forgiveness it becomes a mystical, pure love :

-Hélas! je suis impure, et tout à l'heure encore
Je croyais qu ma chair désirait ton baiser:
Mais je sens, maintenant, cet amour s'apaiser;
Maintenant, un désir inconnu me pénètre,
Maintenant, le frisson dont s'étonne mon être
S'éveille sous ton seul regard sévère et doux! (scene 7,p.44)

The role was undertaken by Mme Daubrives; not a recognized actress, as Antoine's artistic policy advocated using amateur performers. Sarcey noted that she cut a beautiful figure, 'enveloppée de ses cheveux blonds',¹⁹ though it was Mévistos as Jesus, that became the attraction of the evening. Vitu records that the audience were, 'saisi à l'apparition de cette figure sacrée à la barbe et aux cheveux blonds flottant sur un vêtement blanc, et que la parole divine, même en pareil lieu, a été écoutée avec respect et avec émotion'.²⁰ He regretted that the illusion was broken at the end by the actor's 'unmasking' to receive his applause.

Spiritual sanctuary for the outcast is also the theme of Ernest Daudet's Un drame parisien, a five act play, performed at the Gymnase 27 September 1892. Between 1880 and 1900 the Gymnase was the home for many of the most important writers of social drama,²¹ though Antoine for one, felt that Daudet's play would have been more at home at the Ambigu,²² the home of popular melodrama, a widely felt sentiment reflected in the 'général', contemporary, critical silence.

The play is based on the murder of the Comte de Véran, for which Rose Morgan, 'la plus brillante des demi-mondaines' is the prime suspect. She proves she is innocent of killing her lover, the deceased count, but chooses to accept the blame and help the guilty, but respectable, Suzanne de Véran :

Si je dois vivre, qu ferais-je de ma liberté? Vous pensez bien que je ne recommencerais pas mon existence d'autrefois...Elle me fait horreur...Croyez-moi, laissez ma destinée s'accomplir... (mouvement de Suzanne). Qu'importe qu'une femme comme moi reste flétrie? ²³

She prefers death to the immorality of her courtisane existence; a choice inspired by an awakened spiritual love for the Père Vignal, who has divined the truth of her innocence in the crime. At the end of the play, Rose is transformed from

sinner to saint, as Vignal declares, 'Seigneur! Dieu de justice et de bonté, recevez dans votre miséricorde cette âme qui monte vers vous, purifiée par son repentir et sa souffrance' (V.6.p.119).

Henry Fouquier could find little to say about the women in the cast, apparently designed merely to look pretty and show off their dresses, and suggested that Rose, played by Mme Darlaud, might have been better advised by her lawyer, in the trial scene, to wear a less flamboyant outfit, more in keeping with her position as 'innocente accusée'.²⁴ The trial scene he considered worthy of the audience's curiosity though he passed briefly over Mme Darlaud's performance with a cursory, 'a eu du naturel dans le rôle de la courtisane Rose, jusqu'au moment où la grâce l'a visitée'.²⁵ The review for Le Gaulois glossed even more fleetingly and evasively over her performance, described as 'très remarquable' for the first two acts.²⁶

The role of the priest in the play is its most interesting aspect, as it fulfills an important function in establishing sympathy for the sinner on the basis of spiritual love. As a theatrical device, the priest also provided a convenient medium for confession. For women, speech is restricted in public spheres and even harshly regulated in the male dominated household, but in a private, confessional relationship with the priest, they are able to speak freely. This provides a useful means for displaying psychological insight into a woman's character; a chance for her to explain and justify her conduct.²⁷

Increasingly, however, in the 1880's and 1890's the role of religion diminished given that dramatic expression of a woman's discontent in life was resolved not by re-affirmation of a sense of religious based duty and devotion, but by an egoistical search for happiness. In such a materialistic world, the former confessional role of the spiritual advisor was soon to be supplanted by the more worldly practical figure of the doctor.

The debate over the 'pure' woman in England, had found greater expression in literature and painting during the Victorian era, than on the stage. The seduced and abandoned woman had been the subject of George Eliot's Adam Bede, Dicken's David Copperfield or Mrs Gaskell's Ruth, and ^{of} some of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings

(notably Rosetti's unfinished 'Found'), depicting society's exploitation of women.

The Magdalen type did figure in the stage melodrama of the early part of the century and as M. Willson Disher states in his chapter on 'Magdalens', 'there never has been a more popular protagonist than the erring woman who is chaste in soul though guilty in deed'.²⁸ The type he refers to as constantly reappearing in the nineteenth-century melodrama is that based on Mrs Haller, the wayward, repentant wife and mother in The Stranger;²⁹ essentially a type of 'merely tear-compelling penitence' (Disher, p.2). Not until the production of Wilkie Collins's The New Magdalen, 19 May 1873, at the Olympic, was the theme of the fallen woman presented in the form of social drama, and ironically by a writer who was a recognized author rather than playwright.

The reviewer for The Times immediately contrasted Collins's play with the previous form of Magdalen melodrama :

In these days we are used to rehabilitation, but we are certain that in the time of our fathers, when the clemency of the stranger, in the play of that name, was severely censured by moral judges, the conclusion of the 'New Magdalen's' history would not have been tolerated. 30

The review continues with praise for Mr Collins for presenting a Magdalen figure- in the form of Mercy Merrick- who 'has sunk lower in the scale of degradation than Mrs Haller', and yet is not to receive the statutory death penalty; 'Mr Collins has shown himself a bolder man than Kotzebue, teaching, as he does, that penitence sufficiently overbalances any amount of guilt, and merits a reward in this world as well as the next'. 31

Briefly, Mercy Merrick cheats her way into society, wins its respect under false pretences, confesses her falsehood, again via the guidance of a clergyman, Julian Grey, and is forgiven, to the extent that the play concludes with the prospect of her marriage to Julian. It therefore has all the ingredients of the French penitent sinner and resembles Dumas's advocacy of a kind of Christian forgiveness.

The Spectator lighted on the Dumas analogy and based its review on a comparison between 'The ideas of Madame Aubray and of the Rev. Julian Gray', though taking a stern, moral line on both; 'we really do not see how it would be possible to put

two more immoral plays on the stage, than the two which represent the ideas of Madame Aubray and those of Julian Gray in their respective application'.³² The objection to either play was the 'inversion of truth and falsehood and of right and wrong', the glorification of a woman, who though repentant, is nevertheless a sinner :

The ostensible purpose of both these plays is to plead for the pitying pardon of society for the "outcast", driven to a life of sin by the hard conditions of the world, which render hopeless poverty, with its degradation and its suffering, the only birthright of so many women. To such a purpose we have nothing to accord but praise; that sinners of this class may and do repent, and deserve rehabilitation, we thankfully believe, but we protest against their degradation being invested with poetic and heroic attributes, and their rehabilitation being turned into glorification.³³

This was the general outcry against The New Magdalen and Mercy's triumph at the expense of her victim, Grace, proved generally unpalatable. The Daily Telegraph, for instance, considered it 'monstrous',³⁴ and the Era objected to the 'ignoble purpose of casting a halo around a harlot at the expense of an innocent and much wronged girl'.³⁵ Such objections would tend to suggest that the play significantly challenges society's prejudicial attitude towards the fallen woman, but it in fact reaffirms the conservative view, as Shaw indicated :

Mercy is the old-fashioned man-made angel-woman. She is only technically a liar, an imposter, and a prostitute; for the loss of her reputation occurs through no fault of her own; and the fraud by which she attempts to recover her place in society is so contrived as to seem quite harmless when she enters on it.³⁶

The portrayal of the 'man-made angel-woman' was played by Ada Cavendish who achieved success and fame in the role, though not everyone was complimentary about her performance. Accusations of 'stagey' and 'artificial' came from the Daily Telegraph and Pall Mall Gazette³⁷ respectively, whilst the Era provided a more detailed picture of her performance merits and faults :

The 'role' of Mercy Merrick afforded many opportunities for brilliant acting, and especially for the display of pathetic power. Without being able to say that of these Miss Ada Cavendish made the most, we may yet admit that in many instances she rose to the full height of the occasion. In the scene...in which the New Magdalen



Ada Cavendish as Mercy Merrick

determines to forget care and remorse in light-hearted gaiety, she slightly overdid the part. The revulsion of feeling was too sudden and altogether impossible. But in the touching relation of her sad story in the prologue, and in the struggles between pride and conscience in the later scenes, she exhibited admirable power, while her defiance of the woman who taunts her to desperation,...could not have been better, the dignity of her demeanour and the despairing fierceness of her speech being alike appropriate, and fully meriting the applause which a delighted audience bestowed. 38

While reviewers, like the Era's critic, noted a deficiency in 'pathetic power', others grasped the key to her interpretation as the heightening of the essential 'goodness' of the character, in spite of her bad actions :

Mercy might have been represented with greater power, but not with nicer discrimination, than by Ada Cavendish. As the 'Magdalen' is constantly under the influence of conflicting emotions, with a naturally tender conscience at the base of them, the character abounds in subtle details, and it is to the credit of the actress that none of these are overlooked. 39

Shaw described her as generating sympathy ,

first as the good hospital nurse on the battlefield, and then as the nice young lady at Mablethorpe House, quite as Wilkie Collins meant her to. Even the memorable fit of hysterics which swept away the audiences of the seventies with the undercurrent of rich, passionate, indignant emotion which was Ada Cavendish's chief gift, was ladylike in its form and conventional in its symptoms. (Shaw,I, p.234)

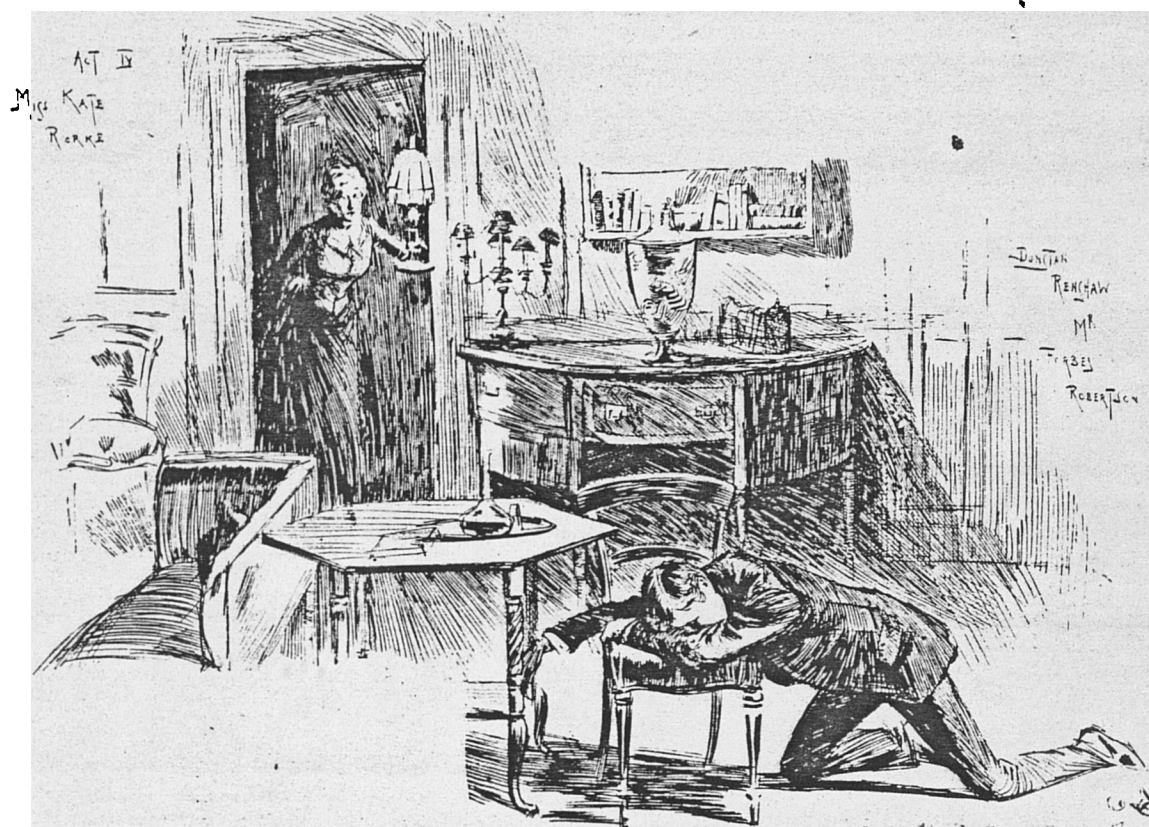
Shaw's comments on the play are particularly interesting, as he compares the original production at the Olympic with its subsequent revival at the Metropole, 28 October 1895, and in particular, the two performances by the actresses who played Mercy, respectively, Ada Cavendish and Janet Achurch. Miss Achurch's interpretation of the role in 1895, was a far cry from the 'ladylike' rendition of Ada Cavendish. Shaw pinpoints the contrast as the transformation from victim to rebel. Audiences, if they but dared admit it, he claimed, had grown tired of penitent victims and were more interested in the 'triumphant rebel' which is the dimension Miss Achurch brought to the role. Though hindered by the hopelessly inadequate company and management of the suburban Metropole, Miss Achurch's courageous efforts were not detrimental to Shaw's commendation of her 'as the only tragic actress of genius we now possess' (Shaw,I,p.232).

The revival of The New Magdalen was undertaken by the manager of the Metropole, Mr Mulholland, on the grounds that since its original production the play had been practically ignored; a curious fact, in Mulholland's opinion, given what he calls the 'recent craze for problem and sex plays'.⁴⁰ Such a comment certainly applies to-day, when the treatment of the fallen woman is not thought of in connection with this long forgotten play of the 1870's but with the advent of Pinero and Jones in the 1890's.

In The Profligate, Pinero introduced a novel angle to the treatment of the fallen woman as a social issue, by presenting the theme from the viewpoint of the fallen man; 'strong meat' for the 'dramatic palate of to-day' as one critic described it.⁴¹ First performed at the Garrick theatre, 24 April 1889, the play treats the marriage of the wayward Dunstan Renshaw to innocent schoolgirl, Leslie Brudenell. Ironically, Renshaw falls in love with his wife after marriage, but his past comes to light in the shape of Janet Preece, his former mistress. Convinced that his wife will not forgive him, Renshaw commits suicide, just before his wife enters intent on reconciliation. Significantly, in the original production, Pinero was called upon to write a happy ending, advocating forgiveness and averting suicide.

The play opened in the newly refurbished Garrick theatre under the management of John Hare, which though not a large theatre (1,200 seats) was well situated and equipped for attracting a fashionable West End audience.⁴² Speculation took place as to how Pinero's new play would be received 'in a capital that has never bowed the knee in the Temples of Augier and Dumas films'.⁴³ Neither could the audience foresee how the play was to end, given the novelty of the reversal of the old theme of the fallen woman, so typical of much of the French drama.

The changing of the plot from suicide, to an act of forgiveness on the part of the wife, merely perpetuates the inequality of the sexes. Contrary to The Times review, which claimed Pinero was endeavouring 'to place the sexes upon an entirely equal footing in questions of morality',⁴⁴ it reinforced the necessity of a 'pure' woman as a means of redemption for the male sinner, to 'hold forth a hand to lead him into a better path and guide and support him as he stumbles on his upward way'.⁴⁵ True, it exposed man's thoughtless and unjust attitudes towards



The Profligate, Act IV, Illustration from the Theatre, June 1889

women, but how different the moral implications would have been, if Renshaw had finally taken his life; a potential signification of society's refusal to accept a male sinner. The illustration in The Theatre of the prostrate husband is a welcome change from the familiar prostrate figure of the erring wife, but if only the angel of forgiveness in the doorway, were replaced by a sign of wifely indignation and outrage.

Pinero openly declared in a letter to Clement Scott, that he did not wish to lose sympathy for Renshaw, this being his justification for the 'happy ending'.⁴⁶ Sympathy for Renshaw, was further generated by investing the interpretation of the role of Janet, Renshaw's former mistress, with a degree of essential goodness; the recognizable penitent Magdalen figure, played by Miss Olga Nethersole. Described by one critic as 'very sweet and tender'⁴⁷ and by another as a 'doleful and consistently lugubrious' victim,⁴⁸ Miss Nethersole's interpretation, lessened the impact of Renshaw's crime of seduction and desertion, by implicating her own guilt, in a mood of constant contrition. There is no happy union for her with Miss Brudenell's brother Wilf, for whom a genuine and reciprocated love has arisen. Their love is not reconciled. Janet leaves the scene rather than contaminate Wilf with her own impurity.⁴⁹ In the final analysis, therefore, what as an initial reading, has the makings of a challenge to the double standard of sexual morality, is a reinforcement of the unequal patriarchal values.

The cast, in general, was a strong one and aside from the appreciative comments on Miss Nethersole's performance, Miss Kate Rorke received much praise for her interpretation of the victim-wife. Reading between the lines of reviewer's comments, it is clear that this was a role that invited a range of emotions, demanding a transformation from the girlish innocence of the opening scenes, to a tragic note in the scène à faire. The latter scene was described by the Star as 'magnificent', exemplifying the powerful note of Kate Rorke's simple 'Deny', in a confrontation scene, intensified by a musical accompaniment which signified the nostalgia of lost happiness.⁵⁰ Critics were unanimous in citing this scene as the highlight of the production and in particular of Kate Rorke's performance. The Daily Chronicle felt it earned her the right to be esteemed as an actress able to rise to the heights

of a 'tragic situation',⁵¹ and the Era quoted the 'tearful eyes and sympathy-laden hearts' of the audience, as testimony 'to a great histrionic triumph achieved'.⁵² The fullest description of the 'Deny' scene came from the Daily Telegraph, which, whilst paying its tribute, supplies more detail of how the effect was achieved :

The first news of her misery comes upon her like a dull dead blow. It stuns her, but she is conscious still. But she reels and rocks like a young tree shattered by the tempest. "Deny it !" she murmurs, in her hollow, awful voice. She has become aged and ugly in the space of a few minutes. Gradually and more gradually still the nervous strength gives out. She can only babble out incoherently, "Deny it !". More and more the frail figure rocks and sways under the supreme agitation. But the man has gone, and the woman falls like a dead log struck by lightning. There is no break in the fall. It is a crash, a collapse. ⁵³

Gestural agitation, vocal dread, and ultimate collapse, were ways in which the actress achieved the emotional impact, which for nineteenth-century critics and audiences, was a sign of potential 'greatness', in the performer.

The contrast in attitudes between society's treatment of the fallen woman and the profligate was subsequently pursued by Oscar Wilde in A Woman of No Importance, first performed at the Haymarket, 19 April 1893. The unease which Sarcey expressed over the subject of Dumas's Denise, is similarly voiced by Kate Terry Gielgud, with respect to Wilde's play, which she describes as presenting, 'An unpleasant subject not sufficiently well handled to make one forgive its unpleasantness'.⁵⁴ The play contrasts the prejudicial attitude towards the woman with a past - Mrs Arbuthnot - and society's tolerance of the profligate - Lord Illingworth. The innovative factor in Wilde's treatment of the fallen woman, is that he transforms the traditional exposition of a woman's guilty secret, into a condemnation of the seducer, instead of the seduced, exemplified by Mrs Arbuthnot's final definition of Illingworth as 'a man of no importance'.

Like Dumas, Wilde's arguments bear overtones of Christian forgiveness,⁵⁵ expressed by the pure, virginal American young lady, Hester, who urges Mrs Arbuthnot's son to forgive his mother in the name of 'God's law', which is 'only love'. Hence, Wilde breaks with the traditional argument of so many thesis plays which maintain that the sins of the parents must be visited on their children. Not only is Gerald Arbuthnot to marry Hester, but his mother will also keep them company.

Wilde accomplished this logical conclusion by establishing Hester as representative of an 'alternative' society. Via her American origins she signifies a 'new world' and the possibility of a better society than the present decadent, lax codes and values of late nineteenth-century England.

The reviews of the play were mixed, some appreciative of Wilde's wit and philosophy, like A.B. Walkley who devoted his review to unravelling Wilde's 'verbal antithesis',⁵⁶ others viewing it as little more than a self indulgent exercise in epigrams, which moreover, the players apparently had difficulty in remembering. In her role as the 'betrayed and long-suffering lady', Mrs Bernard-Beere bravely fought what some considered to be a 'losing battle'.⁵⁷ Her style of acting was epitomized by 'tragic force', 'quietness' and 'self-control',⁵⁸ to which she brought 'beauty, dignity and passion',⁵⁹ which at least in her scorning of Illingworth in the last act, effected a tone of 'grandeur'. The 'quietness' of the acting style proved too much for the Star reviewer who complained bitterly of the silent pauses, 'during which Mr Tree (Illingworth) paces the stage working his eyebrows, while Mrs Bernard-Beere presses her hand on her heart and looks unutterable things'.⁶⁰

Of particular relevance to the study of the Magdalen figure are the descriptions of Mrs Bernard-Beere's costume and appearance, which explicitly exploited connotations of the Pre-Raphaelite Magdalen :

she is a strange medley, a tragic enough figure in her black gown with its white ruffles and her severely parted red hair, but lacking in true pathos. (Gielgud, p.7)

Mrs Bernard Beere looked magnificent in her black robe and Magdalen-red hair, and played the perpetual penitent with great force and sincerity. 61

Penitence and contrition, which have dominated Mrs Arbuthnot's life of caring for the sick and shunning respectable society for fear of the discovery of her secret, are still an essential element on the path to rehabilitation; the essence of the archetypal Magdalen is retained, and it is only in the final moments of the play that one detects the tone of the 'rebel'. Here at least is a more positive indication of the transformation from 'victim to rebel'; rehabilitation via condemnation and ostracization of the seducer.

Pinero's Profligate had been an undoubted success, but not one which was to match the impact of his best remembered portrayal of the woman with a past, The Second Mrs Tanqueray, played at St James's Theatre, 27 May 1893, the month following Wilde's A Woman of no Importance.

The theme is initiated in a discussion between minor characters, of the mésalliance between George Orreyed and former actress, Miss Hervey, as to whether society will ultimately accept their marriage :

Jayne. But surely, in the course of years, he and his wife will outlive -
Drummle. No, no, Doctor, don't try to upset one of my settled beliefs. You may
dive into many waters, but there is one social Dead sea! 62

This is what Pinero's play ultimately demonstrates. Not even provincial society will accept Aubrey and Paula, the play's ill-matched pair - a respectable man and a woman with a past - and they themselves have doubts about their own marriage. Paula realizes she is irredeemably 'tainted through and through'; that she can never escape the past in the future, which is 'only the past again, entered through another gate'. Aubrey's doubts are revealed in his uncertainty as to the suitability of Paula as a companion for his pure, chaste, daughter, Ellean. The social disorder which Paula's presence has created, can only be righted by her suicide; the removal of an impurity which will restore the balance of the social relations she has upset.

Reviews of the production indicate lavish praise both for the author, now established as a long overdue and necessary answer to the demand for successful English playwrights, and for the actress who played the original Mrs Tanqueray, Mrs Patrick Campbell, whose performance and interpretation of the role, earned her overnight success and star status.

There was much comparative comment in the reviews between Pinero's sketch of the fallen woman and her French predecessors. A.B. Walkley referred to her as the 'type which the French call a Daughter of Joy', ⁶³and the Westminster Gazette described her as ^{an}example of the 'highest social development of what is commonly styled the "social curse"'. ⁶⁴Punch however, pointed out that, 'she is not a French 'Manon Lescaut', nor a conveniently consumptive Italian 'Violetta'. No, she is 'English,



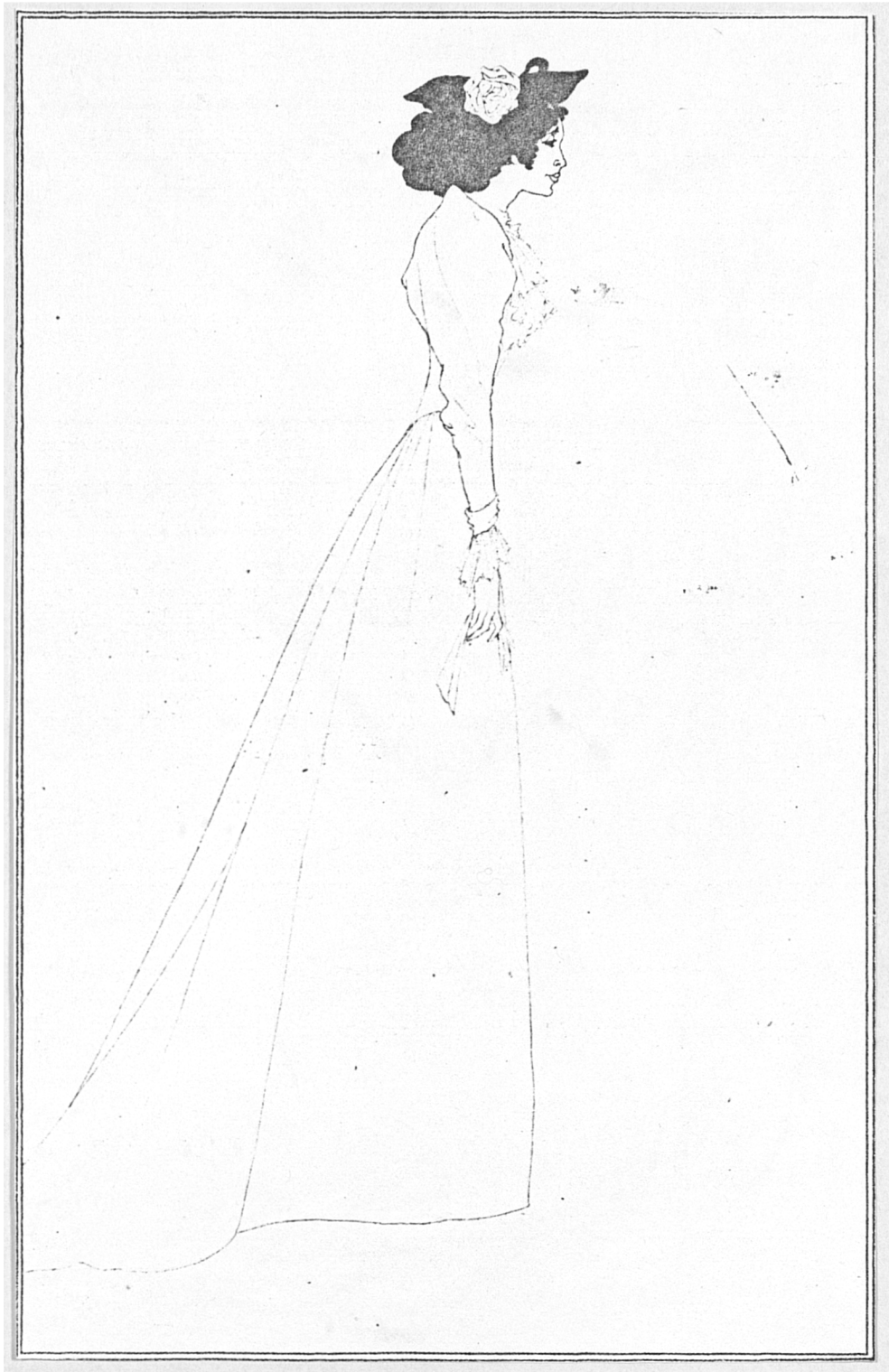
Mrs Patrick Campbell as Paula Tanqueray

you know'. A thorough, right down Londoner, no matter where she was born and bred'.⁶⁵ Most reviews describe the role as a conjunction of opposing qualities - as loving and vulgar, gentle and violent, all heart and no soul, half-demon, half-child, and so on. In short, the archetypal Magdalen, whose sins as a woman, have not completely eradicated the innocence of the child. Campbell's own physique, connotatively contributed to this image. When discovered by Mrs Alexander and Graham Robertson, playing in The Black Domino at the Adelphi, she had only just recovered from an almost fatal illness and describes herself as, 'still physically feeble, white and fragile - my hair only just beginning to grow again'.⁶⁶ The wildness, paleness, and fragility, which she brought to the role of Paula a few months later, suited the portrayal of the capricious 'half-demon, half-child'. Kate Terry Gielgud described her in the role as, 'tall and slight and dark, not pretty but attractive, the type of face that excites curiosity: and she has nervous characteristic hands. There is a tinge of commonness about her though, which helps the part to a certain extent'.⁶⁷ This characteristic willowness, was captured by the artist Aubrey Beardsley in a portrait for the first volume of the Yellow Book. Like Bernhardt, she was to be identified as a mistress of the feminine.⁶⁸

The role was one which made demands on an actress's acting skills, involving a range of emotions. Though there was no on stage death scene to be exploited as a sympathy device, there was the stock-in-trade sympathy trick with the mirror at the end of act three; the moment in which, having but recently felt she could succeed in her new life, she looks in the mirror and sees the woman she really is;⁶⁹ the moment of the recognition of reality beneath the veneer of self-deception.

Reviewers were generally enthusiastic about her performance and overnight success. The Star congratulated itself on a performance which justified the paper's previous promotion of Mrs Campbell, now seen in a part 'worthy of her powers'.⁷⁰ The Daily Chronicle felt that 'she showed a genius which gives her from this time forth an enviable place on the English stage',⁷¹ whilst others were less exuberant but perhaps more realistic in their assessment and predictions :

Mrs Patrick Campbell, who began by being an ineffective Paula in the first act,



Mrs Patrick Campbell, Beardsley's portrait for the first volume of the Yellow Book

grew better and better as the play went on, developing the complex character with skill and firmness, and ended by winning a deserved triumph. It would be absurd to say that she did all that could be done in the part; it would take a far greater actress than Mrs Patrick Campbell to do that; but it is difficult to think of any woman upon our English stage who would do it better. ⁷²

The immediate success of Mrs Patrick Campbell in the role of Paula Tanqueray did have its drawbacks, in as much as the actress was never able to lose the connotative double of the fallen woman, a confusion of roles and reality, ⁷³ but was clearly fortunate, in being chosen to play, perhaps the most celebrated woman with a past in late nineteenth century English theatre. ⁷⁴

The misfortunes of erring women are recurrent features of Pinero's dramatic work, ⁷⁵ but citation of one final example will suffice to confirm the importance of Pinero's treatment of the fallen woman, in the English drama, namely his later play, Letty, first performed at the Duke of York's Theatre, 8 October 1903.

The play moved to a more middle class setting, as opposed to the upper class spheres of the earlier plays, and depicts the temptations of the female clerk, Letty Shell, who to protect herself from the vulgar advances of her social climbing boss, Mr Mandeville, almost gives in to being the mistress of the man she loves, Mr Nevill Letchmere, another profligate figure, and an unhappily married man. The moral lesson of the play is very clear. By resisting the temptation to fall, Letty ultimately finds contentment in life by marrying a man of her own class, the photographer, Mr Richard Perry. By contrast, Nevill's sister, who during the course of events, has 'fallen' in her marriage by deserting her husband for a younger man, has encountered a more miserable existence than that of her previous turbulent married life.

The reviewer for The Times drew analogies between Pinero's play and Flaubert's Mme Bovary, indicating that Letty's marriage signified the lesson Emma tragically never learnt. ⁷⁶ On the whole, the play was criticised for trying to do too much; for its over abundance of characters, detail, incidents, its 'glittering congeries of inessential things', ⁷⁷ and consequently the lack of a central coherent thesis or idea. In particular the subject of hereditary illness, alluded to in Nevill's family, was considered to be inadequately dealt with, ⁷⁸ and worthy of being treated as a subject in its own right, as in Ibsen's Ghosts, ^{rather} than taken as a device. ⁷⁹

Letty's interpreter, Miss Irene Vanbrugh received warm praise for her performance. She was described by Grein as an actress who knows 'how to blend comedy and sentiment',⁸⁰ by The Times reviewer as an actress who is 'always alive, alive all over',⁸¹ by Beerbohm for achieving, 'the tone of the partially refined Cockney, "not quite a lady", but very lady-like indeed',⁸² and by the Westminster Gazette for her perfection which made a difficult role look easy.⁸³ Nevertheless, she was somewhat upstaged by Miss Nancy Price, as Hilda, the shop-girl turned actress. The majority of reviews gave her a special mention and the following comments from the Pall Mall Gazette are typical of the general praise :

the triumph of the evening fell to Miss Nancy Price. She is to the view a lady more stately than humorous. But Mr Pinero has given Hilda a very telling part, and as long as Miss Price was on the stage she kept the house in a state of high exhilaration. She richly deserved what she got, a special call. 84

In spite of the criticisms, therefore, most found something to enjoy, whether Miss Vanbrugh's performance, Miss Price's liveliness or the 'emotional episode', namely the parting between Letty and Nevill (played by Irving) which provided occasion for traditional tears and sympathy.

It is evident that even in later drama, Pinero has not advanced beyond society's refusal to accept the fallen woman. His exposition of the thoughtlessness of male behaviour with regard to sexual morality, and the repentant attitude of the female sinner, never goes beyond critical comment, to a line of radical challenge. His fallen women never achieve the note of triumphant rebel, which Wilde's Mrs Arbuthnot begins to approach.

This was also the conclusion of Pinero's contemporary, the playwright H.A. Jones, whose treatment of the woman with a past is the central thesis of Mrs Dane's Defence, first performed at Wyndham's Theatre, 9 October 1900. The play is constructed around the vetting of Mrs Dane as a possible marriage partner for the adopted son (Lionel Cartet) of Mr Justice Cartet. The cover story she has devised to disguise her 'past', an impersonation which one critic compared to Mercy Merrick's tactic, in The New Magdalen,⁸⁵ is exposed in a grilling examination by the judge in the third act of the play, reviewed as the most thrilling and masterful act

of the four act drama. Thereafter, there can be no question of marriage and Mrs Dane is forced to admit defeat and retire from the battlefield.

Reviews of the play are particularly interesting from the point of view of sympathy, for although the audience entirely supported the inevitable outcome, the ultimate rejection of the woman with a past, its sympathies were nevertheless on the side of the Magdalen figure. This had much to do with the woman's role Jones had created and its interpretation by Miss Lena Ashwell. For instance, Grein concludes his review as follows :

We must, therefore, assume that the author had no intention to grapple with these great and grave issues, but that his sole idea was to write an entertaining play with a great part for Mr Wyndham and a good one for a woman. This he has done, and as it happens, it is the woman who gets the great part, and the actor obtains merely the second best. For, although in the play the judge scores to the detriment of the Magdalen, our sympathies are not with him, but with the sinner. Long after the curtain's fall she stands before us in her pallor, a tearful picture of love, and of the inexorable laws of convention which condones the past of men and is merciless to women. 86

Grein explains that it is not the judge himself 'who forbids the woman with a tainted past to enter into an honourable family, but "the hard law" that governs the life of our community' (p.246). The reviewer for The Times suggests that there was much to be said on the other side, with regard to women sewing wild oats as well as men, but recognizes that 'it would be vain to expect so audacious an experiment at Wyndham's theatre'.⁸⁷

The fineness of Miss Lena Ashwell's acting, particularly in the harrowing trial of the third act, was beyond dispute :

Miss Lena Ashwell illustrated in a manner that could not but command sympathy the distress, the disappointment, and the occasionally sullen defiance of the hunted woman, the victim of the slander's venom. The young actress displayed tragic gifts placing her in a higher position than she has previously attained in serious drama. 88

There is no doubt that this performance increased her standing within the profession. Grein suggested that Mrs Dane's Defence was 'vindication of her claim to rank among the foremost of our contemporary actresses' (p.244) and others linked her name

with the established 'greats' such as Ellen Terry⁸⁹ and Signora Duse.⁹⁰

Her method of acting was the key to her success; her method of 'living' the part as opposed to 'thinking' it out.⁹¹ It was not simply a question of having a 'good' part, credit for which went to the playwright, rather than the actress, but, Miss Ashwell made it more than that, by playing 'from her own emotions', 'dictated by her own feelings'.⁹² Hence, whilst the dramatic structure of the play necessitated a resolution which reaffirmed bourgeois values and prejudices, her own performance constituted a significant challenge to the unjust conception of a 'pure woman', inviting a sympathetic audience response.

Challenge to the concept of a 'pure woman' might have received its greatest dramatization ever, in the shape of Thomas Hardy's Tess. According to Marguerite Roberts,⁹³ Hardy dramatized Tess in 1894-5, but his play was not presented until 1924 in Dorchester, and in 1925 in London. The withholding of the play had much to do with Hardy's suspicion of the theatrical world,⁹⁴ and therefore in spite of the many demands he had from several famous actresses wanting to play the part of Tess; Ellen Terry, Eleanor Duse, Sarah Bernhardt, Mrs Patrick Campbell, amongst others, Hardy never gave way.⁹⁵ Undoubtedly such actresses divined the potential of such a role as Tess; its emotional range and the possibility, perhaps, of creating a late nineteenth century Marguerite. There was less demand from leading actors, due in the main, to the unsympathetic role of Angel Clare.⁹⁶

However, Hardy did sell the American and Canadian rights to Mrs Fiske, who played the part of Tess in an authorized adaptation by Lorimer Stoddard, in New York, 1897. Mrs Fiske's success in the role confirmed the part of Tess as a vehicle for making reputations.

The American success stimulated the demand for an English stage version of Tess, and Hardy's reluctance resulted in an unauthorized version by Hugh Arthur Kennedy on¹⁹ February 1900, at the Coronet Theatre, Nottinghill Gate, which was subsequently transferred to the Comedy on 14 April, until the play was suspended for violation of copy-right. The major criticisms of the production were aimed at the transposition of the novel to the stage, which one critic described as making a 'sow's ear out of a silk purse'.⁹⁷ Mrs Lewis Waller who played Tess received

some moderate praise for her interpretation, one of her more flattering reviews stating 'she showed that Tess really was, as Mr Hardy claimed, "a pure woman"'. ⁹⁸ Her murder scene, in which Tess knives her seducer, was compared to Bernhardt's famous stabbing scene in La Tosca, ⁹⁹ and though not exactly Hardy's Tess or aspiring to 'greatness', Mrs Waller's performance, was technically adequate in drawing sympathy for the seduced woman.

When the play opened at the suburban Coronet, there was a good deal of heckling from the audience. The Era described the jeering at Marian's drunkenness and even at Angel's speeches after Tess's confession ¹⁰⁰ and The Times made it clear that the suburban audience was not ready for such a drama :

It was the attitude of a large part of the audience - the regular suburban audience, out for the evening - punctuating serious scenes with unseasonable guffaws, hissing the villain, and behaving generally as such an audience might be expected, in the present state of our theatre, to behave in the face of such a play. ¹⁰¹

Yet, if the presentation of the female sinner was incompatible with a suburban audience, its argument was ripe for the fervent atmosphere of women's rights and suffrage campaigns. The moment for Tess, was the 1890's characterized by challenges and transformations, not the post-war society of the 1920's, to whom Hardy finally relinquished his own dramatization of Tess.

The penitent Magdalen figure, characterized by repentance and essential goodness, therefore lays claim to an audience's sympathy. More sinned against than sinning, the Magdalen, in the majority of cases, is presented as the victim. So often she comes from an impoverished background, is orphaned and suffers from a lack of parental guidance and education, and lives in a naive ignorance of the ways of the world, circumstances which in short, lead to her victimization, seduction, desertion, and ostracization. Her popularity as a stage figure, is also due in part to the repellant magnetism of the outcast sinner; middle class curiosity for the 'woman who did'.

The extent to which an actress could manipulate the degree of sympathy invested in the Magdalen figure was considerable. An actress's own connotative image

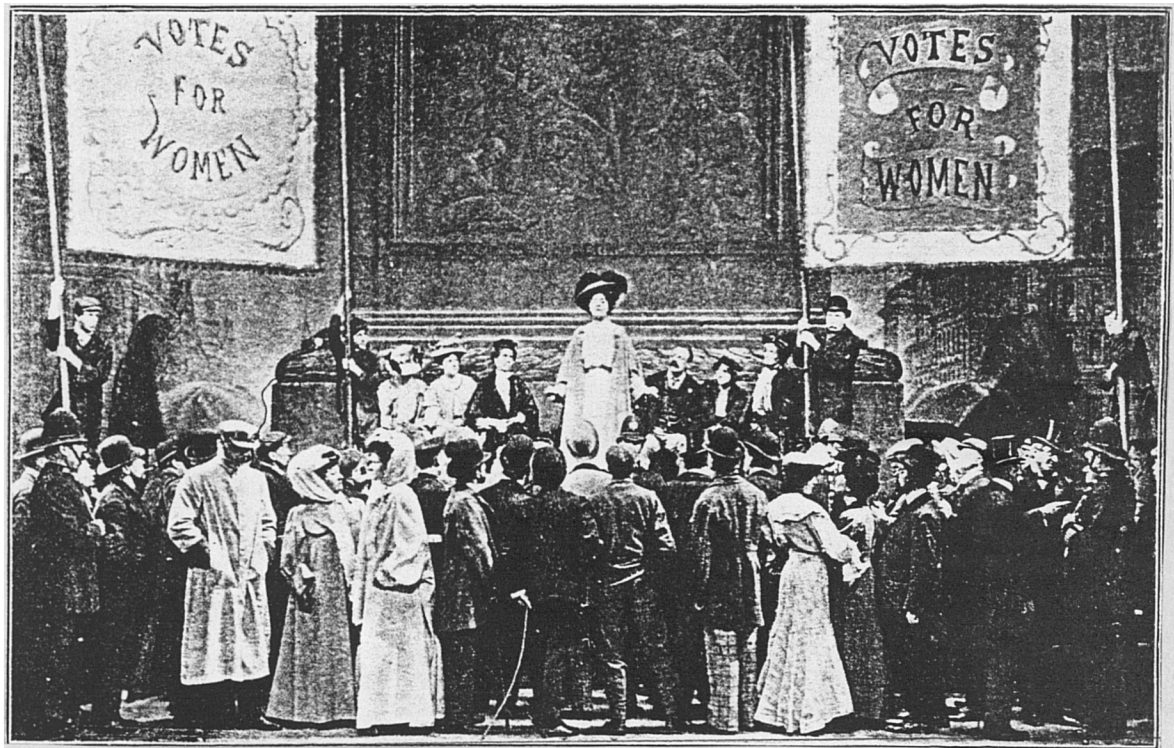
of essential beauty and goodness could conspire towards a favourable reception of a penitent sinner and the role, ^{which} in turn, given the demands inherent in achieving a transformation from sinner to saint, if successful, might well prove a vehicle for creating fame and fortune.

The comparative examples of saintly sinners taken from the English and French stages, also indicate that it is the English drama of the 1890's which becomes much more preoccupied with the woman with a past, than the French. As a descendant of the French courtisane, it is the English Magdalen who in turn becomes a centre of dramatic interest, given the gradual withdrawal of the courtisane from the stage after the 1870's and the advent in England of the successful native playwrights Pinero and Jones.

Whereas the majority of Magdalen figures are victimized penitents, there also exists a nascent type which effects, to use Shaw's expression, the transformation from victim to rebel. It exists in an embryonic form in the arguments of Dumas's Les idées de Mme Aubray and Denise, in a more advanced form in Wilde's A Woman of No Importance, and comes to fruition in Elizabeth Robins's Votes for Women, first performed at the Royal Court, 9 April 1907, which may be taken as a final example in this study, as pointing the way forward to a feminist re-evaluation of the double standard of sexual morality.

Best remembered for its crowd scenes of the second act, the play offers a far more radical portrayal of the woman with a past, than any of the examples cited. Categorized as a 'dramatic tract', Miss Robins's play invited further prejudicial attitudes, in writing and producing theatre for social change. Reviewers argued that it was no good judging it as a play, but as a 'tract, a sermon, an exercise in feminine logic',¹⁰² or as 'the quintessence of the feminist literature of the past forty years';¹⁰³ a story of the kind that 'only an intelligent audience would care to follow'.¹⁰⁴

The presentation of a woman with a past was only one element in a larger argument designed to win sympathy for the suffrage movement. The Times reviewer, for one, doubted whether Miss Robins would advance her cause 'by hanging it on to other questions of seduction, abortion and infanticide'.¹⁰⁵



Votes for Women : The Trafalgar Square Rally Scene

Of all the devices and arguments employed, the Trafalgar Square rally scene, gained more 'votes' than any other for the women's cause. The Daily Chronicle suggested extracting that one scene, and touring the music halls and theatres nationwide with it, as a means of promoting the suffrage cause.¹⁰⁶ The scene also provided an indication of creating better dramatic roles for women, other than the star role. The performances of the platform speakers, Miss Agnes Thomas, as the working woman, and Miss Dorothy Minto as the young girl, who 'carried, not only the stage crowd with her, but every man and woman in the audience by sheer force of her dainty whimsicality and persuasive manner',¹⁰⁷ were credited as notable 'impersonations'.

Sympathy was unlikely to be overtly forthcoming in such an outspoken attack on the patriarchal laws and moral codes which had resulted in the suppression of women's rights; in an argument which advocated the transformation of power to the powerless, or in terms of the Magdalen figure, the transformation from saintly sinner, to crusader for social change. Typically and somewhat ironically, comment on the beauty of the actress playing Miss Vida Levering - the woman with a past - was cited as being an advantage to the women's cause, which, 'would make much more headway than it does if all its advocates were as fair to look upon, as agreeable to hear, and as beautifully dressed as Miss Wynne-Matthi-son'.¹⁰⁸ However, the derisive undertones of The Times reviewer did not set the general tone and Miss Wynne-Matthi-son's performance was considered a successful pleading for the cause :

everything is overshadowed by the magnificent sincerity, the passionate indignation of Miss Wynne-Matthi-son; and if Man does not leave the theatre with a firm determination to be good there is no health in him. And whether the 'votes for women' movement be logic or sentimentality wisdom or folly (as to which I remain uncommitted), Miss Robins should at any rate have done something by this play to check the attempt to meet it by the more shallow kinds of ridicule. ¹⁰⁹

In many ways, the presentation of the woman with a past, who is suddenly confronted by her seducer from the past (politician, Geoffrey Stoner), who is ultimately prepared to do the 'decent' thing, but relieved when he is let off the hook, is only a reworking of the old dramatic model, and one sympathizes, to this extent, with Beerbohm, who correctly guessed every move before it was made.¹¹⁰ Yet, for the first time, the model is used to go one stage further and advocate a programme

for social change :

One woman's mishap? - what is that? A thing as trivial to the great world as it's sordid in most eyes. But the time has come when a woman may look about her, and say, "What general significance has my secret pain? Does it 'join on' to anything?" And I find it does. I'm no longer merely a woman who has stumbled on the way. I'm one (she controls with difficulty the shake in her voice) who has got up bruised and bleeding, wiped the dust from her hands and the tears from her face, and said to herself not merely, "Here's one luckless woman! but - here is a stone of stumbling to many. Let's see if it can't be moved out of other women's way." And she calls people to come and help. No mortal man, let alone a woman, by herself, can move that rock of offence. But (with a sudden sombre flame of enthusiasm) if many help, Geoffrey, the thing can be done. 111

The way forward rests on the solidarity of women with the support of men in positions of power, enlightened men and women who can revolutionize the inequalities of an unjust social system and together work towards the new society of which Wilde's Hester preached.

Notes to Chapter 2 : The Saintly Sinner

1. La Presse, 21 October 1860, p.2.
2. Le Figaro, 25 October 1860, p.2.
3. Les idées de Mme Aubray, in Théâtre, IV, Act Iv.s.6.p.333.
4. Le Figaro, 18 March 1867, p.1.
5. 18 March 1867, p.2.
6. 18 March 1867, p.2.
7. Le Gaulois, 15 November 1871, p.1.
8. La Presse, 20 November 1871, p.2.
9. Le Temps, 20 November 1871, p.1.
10. Looking back over Bartet's twenty year career, in 1908, Beerbohm in a review collected in Last Theatres (London : Rupert Hart Davis, 1970), pp.370-3, recognizes above all, her qualities as an 'eminently "safe" actress' and her 'official charm of manner'; an actress to be trusted with the riband of the 'Legion d'Honneur'.
11. Paul Flat, Figures au théâtre contemporain, second series (Paris : E. Sansot, 1911-13), p.290.
12. Michael Hays, The Public and Performance : Essays in the History of French and German Theatre 1871-1900 (Michigan : UMI Research Press, 1981), appendix 2, lists it as the play most frequently presented at the Comédie Française in 1885.
13. Le Temps, 26 January 1885, p.2.

14. 20 January 1885, p.2.
15. 20 January 1885, p.1.
16. André Antoine, Le théâtre (Paris : Editions de France, 1932), p.223.
17. The unpopularity of this play (there were originally 10 performances), due to its sacrilegious overtones, continued on its revival in April 1904. Antoine records in Mes souvenirs sur le théâtre Antoine et sur l'Odéon: première direction (Paris : Bernard Grasset, 1928), the continued adverse audience reaction :

I^{er} avril 1904 - pour ce vendredi saint, j'ai obtenu l'autorisation de Donnay et de Descaves de suspendre leur pièce pour vingt-quatre heures afin de donner L'assomption d'Hanneté Mattern et l'amante du Christ, de Darzens, un très beau spectacle d'art que je suis fier de garder au répertoire de mon théâtre... Pour L'amante du Christ, le côté nettement sacrilège de la pièce déconcerte visiblement une partie de la salle. (p.231)
18. Prefaced note to play by E. Ledrain (Paris : Alphonse Lemerre, 1888). All subsequent references to the playtext are to this edition.
19. Le Temps, 22 October 1888, p.2.
20. Le Figaro, 20 October 1888, p.3.
21. See Carlson (1972), chapter, 'Minor Theatres 1880-1900'.
22. Le théâtre (1932), p.271.
23. Un drame parisien (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1892), V.4.p.113.
24. Le Figaro, 28 September 1892, p.6.
25. Ibid.
26. 28 September 1892, p.3.
27. For examples of the dramatized confessional situation in the drama cited, see, Rédemption, I.2., L'abandonnée, II.4., Un drame parisien, act 5, final scenes.
28. Melodrama (London : Rockliff , 1954), p.1.
29. Based on the German play Menschenhass und Reue (Misanthropy and Repentance), by Kotzebue.
30. 21 May 1873, p.14.
31. Ibid.
32. 24 May 1873, 662-664 (p.662).
33. Ibid. , p.663.
34. 20 May 1873, p.2.
35. 25 May 1873, p.11.
36. 'The New Magdalen and the Old', in Our Theatre in the Nineties, 1, pp.230-7 (p.231).
37. 21 May 1873, 10-11 (p.11).
38. 25 May 1873, p.11.

39. The Times, 2 May 1873, p.14.
40. Shaw, I, p.231. Shaw explains that Mulholland cited these reasons in a manifesto circulated in the theatre.
41. Pall Mall Gazette, 25 April 1889, p.1.
42. Details of the refurnishing and comfort of the theatre are given in The Times, 25 April 1889, p.9.
43. Star, 25 April 1889, p.2.
44. 25 April 1889, p.9.
45. Theatre, June 1889, p.331.
46. In the letter to Clement Scott, 7 May 1889, reprinted in J.P. Wearing, The Collected Letters of Sir Arthur Wing Pinero (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota, 1974) p.106, Pinero writes :

Could not the moral I had set myself to illustrate be enforced without distressing the audience by sacrificing the life of a character whose sufferings were intended to win sympathy? Reflection convinced me that such a course was not only possible but was one which in no way tended to weaken the termination of my story, whilst it promised to extend that story's influence over a larger body of the public.

47. Theatre, June 1889, p.334.
48. The Times, 25 April 1889, p.9.
49. Pinero, in the letter to Scott, 7 May 1889, openly implicates her guilt, stating, 'Janet suffers for her partnership in Renshaw's sin and passes away' (p.106).
50. 25 April 1889, p.2.
51. 25 April 1889, p.3.
52. 27 April 1889, p.10.
53. 25 April 1889, p.3.
54. A Victorian Playgoer (London : Heinemann, 1980), pp.7-9 (p.7.).
55. The influence of French drama on Wilde has attracted some attention amongst commentators on his work. H. Stanley Schwarz, 'The influence of Dumas films on Oscar Wilde', French Review, 7, no.1 (November 1933), 5-25, offers a direct comparison between Dumas and Wilde, noting parallels in subject matter, style and dramatic technique. E.H. Mikhail, 'The French Influences on Oscar Wilde's comedies', Revue de Littérature Comparée, 42 (1968), 220-233, outlines more general parallels between Wilde's plays and the French well-made play based on Scribe's formula. With regard to A Woman of No Importance, Mikhail suggests Dumas's Le fils naturel and Augier's Les Fourchambault as Wilde's model. The comparisons somewhat over simplify and consequently mislead, in what amounts to a very challenging and complex reception study if such analogies are to be justified. One can at least agree to the theatrical influence of the large influx of French drama on the London stage in the late nineteenth-century, which Wilde and his contemporaries were undoubtedly subject to, but not to the equation of such localised 'similarities' and 'influences', which, as Schwarz concedes (p.25), 'may be a mere coincidence'.
56. Speaker, 29 April 1893, 484-5, (p.485.).

57. Era, 22 April 1893, p.9.
58. Daily Telegraph, 20 April 1893, p.4.
59. Pall Mall Gazette, 20 April 1893, p.2.
60. Star, 20 April 1893, p.2.
61. W. Archer, The Theatrical World for 1893 (London : Walter Scott, 1894), p.112.
62. The Second Mrs Tanqueray (Samuel French : London, 1964), I.p.10.
63. Speaker, 3 June 1898, 626-7 (p.626).
64. 29 May 1893, p.3.
65. 10 June 1893, p.273.
66. My Life and Some Letters, p.63.
67. Gielgud (1980), pp.10-11.
68. The review for Punch, paid her the greatest tribute by stating, 'And not Sarah Bernhardt herself, mistress of all feminine feline art as she is, could play this part better than Mrs Patrick Campbell' (10 June 1893, p.273).
69. The device was also used, for example, in Dumas's La dame aux camélias; in act I, as Marguerite recognizes her ill health by studying her complexion in the mirror and in act 5, when she feels momentarily revived whilst waiting for Armand to return, but then looks in the mirror which reflects the real image of the dying woman.
70. 29 May 1893, p.3.
71. 29 May 1893, p.8.
72. Pall Mall Gazette, 29 May 1893, p.3.
73. By way of illustration, Mrs Patrick Campbell quotes the following incident in My Life and Some Letters :

For a long while I thought it comic that many people held the attitude - "She could not play 'Mrs Tanqueray' as she does if she did not know something of that kind of life" - and - "Which is the real acting, Paula Tanqueray on the stage, or the unworldly creature she appears off?"

I recollect a visit from a distinguished lady - dead long ago - who asked me so many questions so quickly that I blushed to the roots of my hair. I thought she was mad. I still remember her bored expression at the end of our meeting. I never saw her again. (p.82)
74. The part almost went to Elizabeth Robins, but after having been engaged for the role, she graciously backed down in favour of Mrs Patrick Campbell, whom Pinero so particularly wanted to play the part.
75. Others, less fortunate in their male partners than Paula, include The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith (1895), whose attempts at a 'free union' prove disastrous, a role also successfully played by Mrs Patrick Campbell; Iris (1902) and Zoe in Mid-Channel (1909), errant women who came to untimely or unfortunate ends.
76. 9 October 1903, p.4.
77. Beerbohm, Saturday Review, 17 October 1903.

78. Daily Telegraph, 9 October 1903, p.6.
79. Pall Mall Gazette, 9 October 1903, p.4.
80. Dramatic Criticism, 1903-4 (New York : Benjamin Blom, 1971), p.143.
81. 9 October 1903, p.4.
82. Saturday Review, 17 October 1903.
83. 9 October 1903, p.10.
84. 9 October 1903, p.4. .
85. Daily Telegraph, 10 October 1900, p.10.
86. Review in Victorian Dramatic Criticism, edited by George Rowell (London : Methuen 1971), pp.244-7 (p.247).
87. 10 October 1900, p.3.
88. Daily Chronicle, 10 October 1900, p.6.
89. Pall Mall Gazette, 10 October 1900, p.1.
90. Speaker, 13 October 1900, p.43.
91. Ibid.
92. Pall Mall Gazette, 10 October 1900, p.1.
93. Tess in the Theatre (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1950). Information with regard to the dramatizations of Tess is taken from Marguerite Roberts's introduction to this volume.
94. This was due in particular to a lively dispute, chiefly between Pinero and Hardy, over the resemblance of Pinero's The Squire to an adaptation of Hardy's Far From The Madding Crowd. As a result of the acrimonious debate on the issue of plagiarism, the dramatization of Hardy's novel produced much ill feeling and was a subsequent failure. Whilst he was keen to see the renaissance of English drama, he therefore remained wary of theatre practitioners.
95. For a more complete list, see Roberts (1950), p.xxv.
96. Roberts (1950), cites the case recorded by Mrs Hardy, of the actor who informed Hardy he would not play the part of Angel Clare, 'because I have my name to make, and it would risk my reputation with the public if I played anything but an heroic character' (p.xxv).
97. Westminster Gazette, 17 April 1900, p.3.
98. The Times, 20 February 1900, p.9.
99. See Westminster Gazette, 17 April 1900, p.3, and Daily Chronicle, 14 April 1900, p.3.
100. 24 February 1900, p.11.
101. 20 February 1900, p.9.
102. Westminster Gazette, 10 April 1907, p.3.
103. Star, 10 April 1907, p.3.

104. Pall Mall Gazette, 10 April 1907, p.2.
105. 10 April 1907, p. 5.
106. 10 April 1907, p.5.
- 107. Daily Telegraph, 10 April 1907, p.13.
108. The Times, 10 April 1907, p. 5.
109. Westminster Gazette, 10 April 1907, p.3.
110. Around Theatres, p.461.
111. Votes for Women (London : Mills and Boon, 1909), Act 3, p.114.

Chapter 3 : Outcast Queen and Royal Seducer : Medea and Cleopatra

While the stages of London and Paris were debating the redemption of the saintly sinner, another, far more threatening type of female sinner, was also being presented in the two European capitals; a seductress signified by a

literary temptress. Because she was endowed with political, regal, or even supernatural power, above and beyond the scope of the courtisane who had to raise herself out of poverty and seek power, she was a more dangerous outcast or seducer. Two such figures which denoted woman as dangerous seducer and which were represented in the theatre of the nineteenth-century, were Medea, the abandoned, vengeful queen, and Cleopatra, the royal seductress.

Medea

Pardon me, M. Legouv  , but you will never persuade me that the horror inspired by the mere idea of such a crime being committed by the heroine of the play would not prejudice the public against her. 1

This was Mme Ristori's first reply to Legouv  's request that the Italian actress undertake the role of Medea in his reworking of Euripides's tragedy. Given the antipathy towards this 'antique' figure throughout her French stage history, 2 it was an unlikely choice of vehicle, for a mid-nineteenth-century exploration of the double standard of sexual morality. Similarly, Ristori recalls that neither of the nineteenth century Italian versions of Medea, by Niccolini (1810) and by Della Valla, whose slightly later stage version had been more successful, overcame her instinctual aversion to the character or tempted her to play the role of a mother who murders her children (Ristori, pp.199-200).

In spite of the cultural antipathy towards Medea, Legouv   set out to achieve a sympathetic response to the anti-heroine, which he finally realised in 1856, via his own reworking of the myth in the interests of contemporary morality, and the talents of the ascendant Italian star, who had finally been convinced

that Legouvé's Médée could be played as a sympathetic outcast.

Subsequent translations of Legouvé's version, or other rewritings of Euripides's tragedy, notably Médée, by Catulle Mendès (1898), written expressly for Sarah Bernhardt, failed to equal the original success of Legouvé and Ristori, but are included here, to illustrate the difficulties inherent in generating a sympathetic response to the crimes of an abandoned wife and mother.

The preface to Legouvé's Médée ³ is crucial for an understanding of the dramatist's conception of Médée and the moral purpose underlying his version of the tragedy. Essentially, Legouvé conceived Médée as a mythological, royal, outcast, that might be re-presented in a way which would generate sympathy for the abandoned woman and have currency in the context of nineteenth-century morality and its double standard of sexual morals. This he achieved by reworking the myth at a number of levels. Firstly, he aimed to show her as not simply struggling between love for her offspring and hatred, born of an excess of love for her husband, but to show an excess of filial affection, in order to justify 'une vengeance de mère'. This accounts for the early scenes, in which she is shown expressing concern for her suffering children and demonstrating an abundant flow of maternal love :

Ma tendresse elle-même est fouguese, et s'égare
En transports dont l'ardeur effraye un coeur d'enfant...
Souvent je leur fais peur, même en les embrassant! (I.6.p.34.)

A further sympathy factor is generated by Legouvé's rendition of the tragic figure as a 'barbare' and not a civilised Greek. He aimed to

la rendre à la fois plus terrible et moins atroce d'expliquer enfin son crime en le rattachant au culte où elle a été nourrie, à la contrée dont elle est sortie : je lui ai donné ses dieux pour complices. (preface, p.6.)

A cult of violent gods again shifts some of the responsibility of the crime from Médée to this powerful, external, driving force.

Above all, the most vital factor in understanding Legouvé's interpretation

of the myth, is his summation of the Medea story as 'le plus terrible chapitre de l'histoire de la séduction dans le monde!' He envisaged the story as a symbol for contemporary morals. What is this so-called civilised Greek, Jason,

sinon le symbole lointain et poétique de ces vils corrupteurs de nos jours qui entraînant à Paris, du fond de nos provinces, les tristes victimes de leurs promesses, déshonorent notre société par leur cynisme et leur ingratitude impunie! (preface, pp.7-8)

And in the case of Médée :

ne retrouvez-vous pas les traits de cette grande malheureuse coupable qu'on appelle Médée, dans ces pauvres filles séduites comme elle, abandonnées comme elle, désespérées comme elle, et, comme elle, meurtrières, par désespoir, du fruit de leurs entrailles! (preface, p.8.)

If the law, 'fatalement indulgente pour le séducteur' is at fault, then at least the public conscience may be pricked, using the medium of theatre to demonstrate where the guilt really lies. In order to achieve this, Legouvé devised the character of Orphée as 'l'interprète poétique de la pensée morale'. Orphée stands for his own time (which did not recognize the moral indignity of such crimes) and for the future; a contemporary raisonneur figure in antique guise.

Finding an actress prepared to risk the dangers inherent in playing such an unsympathetic role, was not an easy task, as indicated by Ristori's initial refusal. Legouvé had originally offered the role to Rachel in 1852, but her reaction from the first had been hostile. Primarily she objected that it would be difficult for the public to accept the murder of two children by their mother. After a prolonged series of attempts to put the play into rehearsal at the Comédie Française, Legouvé finally relinquished his efforts in 1854 and subsequently offered the part to Ristori in 1855. It was only after a reading of the play that Ristori overcame her uninformed antipathy and was swayed by its beauty, 'splendid situations', Legouvé's justification of the murders and above all concealment of the death of the children from the public (Ristori, pp.203-4). She had the play translated into Italian by Montanelli for performance in her second Parisian season in April 1856, at the Salle Ventadour, where it became an overnight success.

As an established actress, unquestionably outstanding in the roles of classical tragedy, Rachel's rejection of *Médée* was perhaps not a serious loss to her highly successful repertoire. However, it had a damaging effect on the strained relations with her public, which was tiring of such capricious acts and her disappearances on international tours. Ristori's arrival in Paris in 1855 was therefore used as a means of revenge, as critics, spearheaded by Jules Janin and Dumas père lauded the Italian at Rachel's expense. Because of the prejudice and competition instigated by the antagonized press, it is hard to ascertain how much of Ristori's triumph in *Médée*, was engineered by manipulated public opinion, though her London success, in the June of 1856, when audiences flocked to see Ristori and were electrified by her performance, is perhaps valid testimony to her talent.

Constant critical comparison of the ascending Ristori and waning Rachel, emphasized the contrast in acting styles, physique and public images. On all three accounts, the actresses could not have been more dissimilar. Whereas Rachel's tragic style was noted for its restraint, majesty and statuesque qualities, Ristori's, based on the Italian tradition, was a far more energetic, physical, emotional and gestural style, ^{latter} ~~the~~ initially proved startling - notably to English audiences. There were partisans for both tragic styles which kept up a long and lively debate:

The Ristorians point to the largeness of outline and the elevated character that belong to the impersonations of their idol; the partisans of Rachel dwell on the variety of colour and the apparent spontaneity by which the French tragedienne is distinguished. That Rachel is more natural, both parties will probably agree: so that the discussion resolves itself into the question, whether the real or the ideal is preferable in tragic art; this question will remain unsettled as long as tragedy itself exists. 4

Ristori's ample physique suited her 'larger than life' style of playing and was again a marked point of contrast with Rachel :

Rachel and Ristori present the most vivid contrast. The one was small, spare, almost thin, the other, more in tune with the ideal of beauty of the time, was tall and well, even amply proportioned. She had a finely formed head, luxuriant brown hair, an open, intelligent brow, and a slender, elegant neck. She had a Roman nose, slightly aquiline, and a voice of unusual range, over which she had perfect control. 5

In her public persona, Ristori connoted an untainted image of respectability from which Rachel's unorthodox love life had precluded her, and whereas Rachel's international excursions were viewed as a desertion by Parisian audiences, Ristori's tours signified the promotion of Italian nationalism. In short, an actress of imposing appearance, dynamic in gesture, respectable, destined for international acclaim and in complete contrast to the previous queen of tragedy, was the image Ristori brought to Legouv  's *M  d  e*.

For a successful, sympathetic response to Legouv  's *M  d  e*, a display of both ferocious anger and maternal anguish was required. The role afforded the actress a tightly structured composition of sudden emotional reversal, in which love interchanged with hate, self-sorrowing was supplanted by revenge, and fatal anger was punctuated by despairing remorse. To this difficult and demanding range of emotions Ristori's talents and image were well-suited. She established her skill in portraying ferocity and tenderness in a great number of her tragic roles; inspiring sympathy and pity in her interpretation of the sinners Phaedre and Mary Stuart, portraying violent jealousy and criminal passions in Alfieri's Rosamunda and as Milman's Bianca in Fazio.⁶

Yet Medea was the role with which she was most closely identified and which provided the best showcase for her talents. Aided by Legouv  's dramatic manipulation of sympathy, Ristori's method was to evince a sympathetic response by means of lively, physical and energetic, attitudinal poses, which externally signified the inner emotional conflict of changing passions - love, hatred, jealousy and revenge. 'Picture-acting' was how one English critic described it,⁷ and it was this visual demonstration which accompanied the spoken agony, that audiences found so startling and at the same time, spell-binding.

It is as a series of images, based on her 'picture-acting' that the mid-nineteenth-century productions are recalled, either by Ristori herself, or by her critics. Her first entrance was a memorable tableau, denoting a majestic power and maternal tenderness; an image which she sustained throughout. The Times records the expectant moment when,

a tall and handsome woman, carrying one child and leading another, appeared on the mountains at the back of the stage. This was the Ristori - this was Medea, in whom the maternal principle was at once made prominent to heighten the horror of the catastrophe. The demeanour was proud and commanding, the countenance was of the haughtiest in its outline, the eye was dark and flashing, and though the only feeling delineated was that of suffering...the aspect was of a suffering queen. A thunder of acclamations followed, - almost anticipated her appearance, - and even when she had uttered the first few lines, instructing her children to kneel before the temple with suppliant boughs in their hands, and implore protection, there was such tenderness in her tone that a gasp of sympathy might be heard in every direction. The charm of the voice, the power of modulating it were so manifest that none could resist its fascination. 8

For this opening 'pose' Ristori had studied the Niobe group of statues housed in the Niobe Hall at the Uffizi gallery in Florence. ⁹ The group is of the mother Niobe, in an attitude of prayer to the gods, praying that the last of her offspring, hidden at her breast might be saved from massacre by Apollo and Diana. ¹⁰ Her children are grouped about her in attitudes of bewilderment, sorrow, flight and hurt. Ristori claims to have copied 'the attitude of a woman utterly exhausted', for her opening tableau and acknowledges a debt to the statues, for many of her 'poses' (Ristori, p.13).

Her 'larger than life' gestural tableaux, which some criticised for being too statuesque and insufficiently womanly, ¹¹ were backed not only by her impressive physique and style, but also by an imposing costume designed by the painter Ary Scheffer. The mantle accompanying the sober red dress, trimmed with black lace, required careful handling so as not to impede the gesture and after the first entrance, was skilfully arranged to hang behind Ristori's back, adding to the grandeur of her outline, without being cumbersome (Ristori, pp.206-7).

Of all the images in the original production, the one which surpassed all the others was Mme Ristori's 'Leopard speech', in the climax of her confrontation with Créuse at the end of act one, in which, by means of vivid 'picture-acting', she depicted the leopard tearing at his victim :

As I uttered these words I assumed the air of a wild beast gloating over his victim, while, with my hands, I made as though I were indeed dismembering my prey, my whole expression and attitude being calculated to excite the utmost dread and horror. (Ristori, p.209)

On the occasion of the London performance, a visible shudder swept through the audience at this 'sublime burst of rage'. 'The late Mr Edmund Kean once exclaimed with honest pride that the pit "rose at him"', wrote the reviewer for The Times, 'Madame Ristori might declare with equal truth that the stall shrank from her'.¹²

The second act, to quote Ristori's own words, 'abounds in fine situations and marvellous scenic effects, which offer the actress a large scope for the display of her dramatic capacity' (Ristori, p.211). These notably included Médée's meeting with Jason and the spurning of her children, because they remind her of their father, immediately giving way to maternal remorse, acted, as Ristori described, with incredible energy :

I stretched out my arms towards them in a transport of maternal affection, and they at once rushed into my embrace. I threw myself upon a seat, took the youngest on my knee, and pressed the other with rapture to my heart; thus forming a group which produced the greatest effect upon the audience. (Ristori, p.214)

Immediately after this, rage transports her to imagine the murder of her rival, again, accompanied by a vivid piece of 'picture-acting' as she drew herself up 'to appear of gigantic size, holding my dagger tightly clasped aloft, so that men might well have been thunderstruck at my aspect' (Ristori, p.215).

The play closed with a final image of Ristori as a stony-faced Medea, a 'statue of remorse', again pulling herself up into 'an imposing and ferocious attitude', to extend an accusing arm towards Jason, 'like an image of inexorable Destiny' (Ristori, p.223).

From beginning to end, therefore, Ristori's performance was composed in a series of images denoting the seduced and abandoned woman, and outraged mother, in a particularly fearful and imposing manner. Her striking style was aped in several burlesques, which in itself was a further indication of her success. Robert Brough, who directly parodied her style in a popular extravaganza, delighted even Ristori.

Ristori always gave her performances as Medea in the Italian translation of Legouv  's M  d  e by Montanelli. The large number of expatriot Italians in



Ristori's 'transport of maternal affection'

the Salle Ventadour greatly helped in the reception of the Italian text. It was also apparently acceptable to English audiences, given that they were familiar with the story of the myth which facilitated comprehension. Moreover :

the blank verse, the distinctly articulated words and broad sounding vowels of Italian tragedy were much more accord with our notions of poetical dramatic language than the diction of Racine and Corneille. 13

However, English successors to Ristori were perhaps not so fortunate, in having to rely on inadequate translations or adaptations of Legouv  's script.

One such English translation circulated in print, was the version by the translator of Dumas's La dame aux cam  lias, Matilda Heron. 14 Stylistically its deference to antiquity, signified by a prolific register of 'thees' and 'thous', did little to aid the delivery of speech and in the shortened directions and omissions, or alternatively transference, of some important speeches to different characters, some of Legouv  's moral intentions were belied; most significantly the conception of Orph  e as a raisonneur type. Orph  e's constant defence and advocacy of marriage as the pillar of society in the original, is not registered as a 'dominant structure' 15 in the translation. For example, in the conflict between the 'warrior' and 'poet' in act one, in which Orpheus argues his case for being a civiliser of men without recourse to violence, Heron in her translation, omits the climax of Orph  e's argument which is his speech about the cultivation of the family instinct :

Du petit grain de bl  , naissent, gr  ce    la lyre,
Et l'amour du logis, et l'amour de la paix,
L'instinct de la famille avec tous ses bienfaits,
Le mariage enfin, cette premi  re pierre
D'o   part en s'  tageant la cit   tout enti  re! (I.1.p.14)

Neither has Heron given Orpheus the speech defending the sanctity of motherhood in the violent mob scene at the end of act two. This is transferred to Medea. In fairness, this perhaps reflects the difficulty in finding an English equivalent to the French raisonneur type, but the overall effect is to lose the voice of modern reason; a moral voice advocating pity for the female victim.

Significant indicators of the violence Medea inflicts upon herself in the wretchedness of her plight are also absent. In scenes six to eleven of act two in Legouvé's text, Medea undergoes a difficult struggle in resolving to follow a path of crime, the element of inner struggle generating audience sympathy. Firstly in the soliloquy of scene six, she thinks out her plan for killing Créuse, followed by confrontation with Créuse in the following scene, who has come to save her from the angry Greeks. Her dilemma in this reversal of events is indicated in the stage direction, 'Elle tombe sur un siège près de l'autel, en proie à un violent combat, froissant convulsivement son poignard pendant que Créuse parle' (II.7.p.61). If only Créuse will let Jason go then Médée will leave her alone, but when Créuse replies that this is impossible given that she too is now love's victim, Médée resolves her struggle in a declaration of violence against Créuse. In the translation this direction is omitted and the response is simply a defiant one, not indicating any sense of struggle.

Neither is the function of the gods, of particular importance to the sympathy factor (a point discussed previously in Legouvé's preface), given adequate recognition in the translation. For instance, there is no indication that the statue of Apollo in act two is changed to that of Saturn in act three; a crucial transformation, as it is to the blood-thirsty Saturn that the children are sacrificed.

However, the essence of Legouvé's conception of the seduced and abandoned wife and mother did remain fundamental to English versions and in plot synopses of the play included in reviews, it was frequently pointed out that :

She is not the potent enchantress, who, when she is avenged, can float off in a chariot drawn by winged dragons, and boast the aid of her great ancestor, the Sun; but merely a deserted woman of a passionate temperament. 16

Her role as victim and seduced outcast was therefore clearly understood.

In the light of the difficulties which working with a translated text posed, the task of the actress in creating sympathy for a mother guilty of infanticide, was made significantly harder. Neither could actresses escape the shadow of their supreme predecessor, Mme Ristori.

Curiously, two versions of Legouv  's M  d  e were attempted on the English stage subsequent to Ristori's success and in both cases by actresses of American origin. Miss Avonia Jones braved the role at Drury Lane in November 1861 and Miss Kate Bateman made her attempt in 1872, on the Lyceum stage, where Ristori had been so successful. Both actresses achieved some merit in the role, Kate Bateman more so than Avonia Jones - yet on the whole, the productions were overlooked. This was not simply a question of their being overshadowed by their Italian predecessor, but neither were fated with propitious moments in theatre history.

Having made her d  but in America in 1856, Miss Avonia Jones arrived in London following an Australian tour, to make her English d  but in Medea, at a time when Drury Lane had suffered a series of disastrous managements, instability and financial losses, and was not enjoying a reputation for successful drama. Amongst the few reviewers who wrote of the performance, The Times speculated as to whether her slight physique would enable her to achieve sufficient power for the exposition of violent jealousy and crime :

To those who recollect the imposing figure of Madame Ristori as she made her entrance from the rocks at the back of the stage, the slight and by no means commanding form of Miss Jones forbodes a somewhat feeble delineation of the Colchian heroine, and though it may be perceived that her voice is both musical and flexible, and her movements generally easy and natural, the spectator is led to expect that while the pathetic side of Medea's character will be delicately portrayed, the passions of hatred and revenge will not received adequate expression. 17

However, The Times reported that this was not the case, continuing,

This opinion she dissipates as soon as opportunity presents itself, and in the famous 'Leopard speech', as well as in other passages, where Medea's native savagery is brought forward, she shows an intensity and an abandonment to passion which compensate in a great measure for a deficiency in physical strength. 18

There was none of Ristori's vivid method of 'picture-acting' in this performance. Simply an altogether more restrained composition of 'finely rendered', maternal tones and 'graceful and statuesque' gestures. 19

The performance of Medea by Miss Avonia Jones did not make any significant

impact upon the London stage, or bring her international fame. She returned to England in 1865 for a second tour, but caught a cold which triggered off consumption and like Rachel (but minus her fame) she returned to her native country and to an early grave.

When Miss Bateman undertook the role over a decade later, the Daily Telegraph was concerned, that as the play was being staged in the summer, many people would miss a worthwhile production, as it clashed with holiday departures.²⁰ Even those staying behind in the July heat of 1872 were not likely to favour the hot stuffiness of the theatre, though the critic gave ample assurance that Miss Bateman's Medea was well worth the discomfort.

A greater obstacle than the summer heat, to the success of Miss Bateman's Medea, was the fact that it was sandwiched between the first successes of the rising star, Henry Irving. H.L. Bateman, the American impresario, had taken over the management of the Lyceum in 1871 as a means of promoting his actress-daughters, of which he had four. However his first triumph went to Henry Irving in The Bells which ran from November 1871 to May the next year, and was succeeded by his next box-office success, Charles I in September 1872. In the summer between these two, Kate Bateman gave her performance as Medea. Given the prominence of Irving's early successes in theatre history, notably The Bells, it therefore remains largely ignored by surveys and histories of the Lyceum management and productions.

Furthermore, record of the adaptor of Legouv  's text, painter-dramatist, Mr W.G. Wills, really begins with his own play Charles I, Irving's second 'hit' and his subsequent involvement in 'Irvingesque drama'. Yet it was his adaptation of Legouv  's M  d  e which brought his talents to the attention of the Bateman management and which was instrumental in establishing him as 'dramatist to the Lyceum'.

Wills based his adaptation on Legouv  's version, laying stress on maternal love, though introducing changes to suit both an English audience and the talents of Miss Bateman. Reviewing for the Pall Mall Gazette, Dutton Cook concludes that plays of a 'classical design' are ill-suited to an English temperament, that

on the French stage classical tragedy 'expired with Rachel' and that if Legouv  's M  d  e survives, then it does so simply 'upon the reputation with which it was endowed by Ristori'. His summatory comments with respect to Miss Bateman's performance are indicative of an overall failure :

Miss Bateman has carefully studied the part, wears her fluent draperies with statuesque grace, moves majestically, declaims with vigour, invests her quieter scenes with great tenderness, and taxes her physical resources even cruelly to give effect to her more vehement speeches. But she is not Medea - she is, indeed, nothing like Medea. She fails to impress the spectators with a due feeling of awe; her passion is more clamorous than moving, and a suspicion of insincerity attends upon her most urgent endeavours. What uninspired acting may do, Miss Bateman may be said to have fully achieved; but inspiration of a very subtle nature is indispensable to the representative of Medea. 21

That Miss Bateman was not an actress to rank among the 'greats' in the part, is clear from press reviews, though there were strong points in her performance. The Spectator identified one of her strongest as being able in 'face, figure and speech' to denote the 'barbaresque enchantress' that Legouv  's text laid stress upon :

Under the spell of Miss Bateman's art, this face expresses the griefs and exhaustion of long-deferred hope and brooding passion, and the latent threat which belongs to the sorceress's consciousness of preternatural power and almost preternatural vindictiveness, with wonderful effect, and with that barbaresque tone which contrasts powerfully with the finished grace of the perfectly human conception of life as the Greeks had conceived and developed it. There is something wild and ungoverned in her eye, something which speaks of cruel passions underlying queenly dignity. This is the first great element of her success. 22

Yet in the incantation scene, devised to show Medea casting a spell over the veil to poison her rival, there was an absence of the awe and thrill of the powers she conjured, and the scene relied more on the stage effects of awesome blue and yellow fire across her face, than the commanding presence of the actress. Reasons for her failing, lay in an inability to modulate passion. Being 'too even in her energy' and not benefiting from the contrast 'of softer lights to throw out the stronger' she had failed to learn 'the true economy of passion'. 23 This may well have been, as the Spectator suggested, as a result of the 'too constant straining after the grand style', and points towards the problems of working on the English stage, with the performance of an actress grounded in Italian as a

blueprint.

Just as critics had described Ristori's performance in terms of striking tableaux, now too, her 'imitators' were scrutinized for their moments of 'picture-acting', particularly in their delivery of the 'leopard speech'. In Miss Bateman's performance, The Times considered the 'leopard speech' as the turning point, as at this moment, she overcame her initial uneasiness, gained command and 'became at one with the character she assumed', and went on from strength to strength for the remainder of the performance.²⁴ The Spectator opined that it was played with 'almost unapproachable force', but that it would be impossible to conceive of a delivery that would in any way surpass Ristori's.²⁵ Comments on the last image and the finally accusatory 'Thou' were mixed. Some detected an absence of maternal remorse, denoting undesirable echoes of her unrelenting Greek ancestor, whilst others - including an enthusiastic house - felt that the final note struck the tone of a culpable, but victimized outcast, and successfully carried out Legouv  's aim of a transference of sympathy to the royal outcast.

The management of the Lyceum by H.L. Bateman terminated in the late '70's, following his death and the abandoned attempt of his widow to carry on alone. The management passed to Irving and amongst the Lyceum's productions in 1879, Irving engaged Miss Genevi  ve Ward to play Stephanie in Forget-me-Not; the role of a devious woman with a past. The play was a huge success, noted for its 'Frenchness' in its treatment of an outcast fighting to leave the demi-monde and provided the inspiration for Miss Ward's performance, in French, of Augier's L'aventuri  re. Hence, when in 1883 she played Legouv  's M  d  e (in English), she was already associated with outcast roles and with continental acting styles. For, her early career was based in opera and she had trained with Regnier at the Com  die Fran  aise in the mid 1870's; Regnier also rehearsing her for her role in L'aventuri  re. Moreover, as a teenager she went regularly to see Ristori perform in Florence and in later life knew the actress sufficiently well to tutor her in English for the part of Lady Macbeth.²⁶

Miss Ward's image therefore denoted a distinctly cosmopolitan flavour. She undertook international tours and was fluent in French and Italian, with experience

of both European stages and styles. Miss Ward's Medea had far more of the emotional continental style than either of the ^{Medeas in the} two American productions, though not that this was considered an entirely good thing, by the press. The Daily Chronicle felt that her declamation was 'in parts magnificent and her outbursts of wild anguish thrilling, though at times ultra-dramatic'.²⁷ However, it was the soft, sympathy-inviting, tone that was missing and which detracted from the portrayal of Medea as a woman more sinned against than sinning :

She fails rather in awakening that sympathy with Medea's wrongs which it is Legouv  's object to inspire...Miss Ward excels in the largeness of gesture and leopard-like ferocity appertaining to one side of the character. The tenderness required to relieve such a terrible embodiment of human vindictiveness escapes her. Her love for Jason and for her children has a false ring, and thus the full significance of her jealous fury on the one hand and of the depth of her maternal sacrifice on the other is missed. 28

The Pall Mall Gazette advised modulating her performance by substituting a 'plaintive' plea for her 'fierce lament'²⁹ and the Era implicated her excessive energy, by remarking on her half-fainting state at the close of performance.³⁰

In short, it appears almost impossible for an English speaking actress in the role of Legouv  's Medea to satisfy the critics. Either she was good at portraying tenderness and deficient in deadliness, or conversely ^{she was} awesome and wanting in softness. It was a question of balancing English and continental interests and none succeeded in getting the balance just right. Avonia Jones and Kate Bateman had the restraint and grace of the English speaking stage but were stagey or stiff when taking their cue from the Italian tradition. Miss Ward had an appropriate declamatory style studied from the French, but was lacking in the restraint and grace of the English stage.

The history of Legouv  's M  d  e on the English stage is therefore beset with the problems of acting styles, of overcoming the weaknesses of translated or adapted texts and finding actresses of sufficient genius to interpret the part. Failure at any one of these levels risked serious distortion of the original intention of pleading the cause of the seduced and abandoned wife and mother, in mythic guise.

The success of Legouvé's attempt to harness the myth to a modern debate on sexual morality may be better judged against the relative failure of Catulle Mendès's Médée, written expressly for Sarah Bernhardt and first performed at the Renaissance theatre, October 1898, with music by Vincent d'Indy and scene design by Mucha. On this occasion an established dramatist and star actress did not produce a winning formula, owing to the conception of Médée and the inability of Bernhardt to win the sympathy of her usually adoring audiences, in such an unpopular role.

The Médée of Mendès is once more the divinely powerful fille du soleil, riding triumphantly and majestically away from the scene of her crimes in a chariot of magnificent royal splendour. It is impossible to feel sympathy for this queen who is both deficient in maternal love and abounding in sexual jealousy. All the images of love in the play are those of passion related to the sexual act. Jason recalls his former love for Médée as a passionate and physical duel :

Rappelle-toi les nuits de nos hymens farouches,
Les combats de nos flancs et les duels de nos bouches,
Et nos bras qui faisaient, rudes et doux, le tour,
En l'étreinte de nos deux corps, de tout l'amour,
Et de nos yeux mourants les lassitudes closes...31

When Médée imagines the love between Jason and Créuse, she conceives it in terms of the bedroom scene:

Ne dors pas cette nuit avec elle!
-O torture de mon noir chevet sans sommeil!
Nue et belle, dans les coussins de lin vermeil
Et l'ombre où ses cheveux sont du jour, tu la touches!
Tu veux ses yeux, son sein, ses lèvres...oh! vos bouches
Jointes! Vos bras noués - Une autre...et mon amant! (II.p.114)

Ristori had ensured the signification of maternal love by making her first entrance accompanied by her children. Heralded by a foreboding, disembodied, repeated cry of 'Malheur!', Bernhardt made hers, alone and portentous; an ominous presence detaching itself gradually from the setting :



Bernhardt's Médée : Illustration on the Front Cover of Le Théâtre, November 1898

Elle se dresse au sommet de la montagne, de derrière une roche; seule, elle est lumineuse dans l'obscurité; et vêtue d'écarlate et d'or, elle ouvre peu à peu de longs bras d'où pendent des voiles noirs. - Elle semble, dans l'haleine rouge du mont, un colossal papillon de nuit, formidable comme un aigle, ou un vampire aux ailes étendues. (l.p.21.)

Using 'draped arm gestures', ³² and much bodily gesticulation, her playing may have echoed the highly gestural rendition of the part by the Italian actress, ³³ but without modulations of tenderness, it bordered on wildness rather than tearful anguish.

There are several reasons which can be put forward as justification of Bernhardt's undertaking of the role. Firstly, she herself, at this stage of her career, was free to choose her own repertoire, though she did not always choose wisely. Arsène Alexandre's review of the production hints at an element of self-gratification :

En art, il n'y a pas de moyen terme : il faut travailler pour soi ou pour les autres. M. Catulle Mendès et Madame Sarah Bernhardt ont cette fois vaillamment travaillé pour leur seule satisfaction, et si celle des autres fut vive, ce n'a été que par surcroît. ³⁴

That Bernhardt was attracted to Medea is indicated in her own sculpting of a large statue of the enchantress, and is self-confessed in an interview for the Revue d'Art dramatique, in which she also, more importantly, admits to her conception of Medea as a lover and not as a mother :

-Médée, Médée, ah! cher monsieur, C'est un beau rôle, un rôle que j'aime. Ce que j'y ai vu ? Mais l'amante, l'amante jalouse, passionnée, la femelle. C'est en cela qu'elle est belle, d'ailleurs, et intéressante. C'est la femelle barbare. Comme mère, elle n'existe pas, puisqu'elle tue ses enfants. ³⁵

A further inclination towards the role is given in the same interview, as she discusses the play's music and tells of her dream d'opéras parlés . With Mucha's set designs and Indy's music, the production was working towards her Wagnerian idea of a fusion of the arts on a grand scale, though she complained of the smallness of the stage and the poor acoustics. ³⁶

When choosing roles, Bernhardt had a preference for those which were suited



Bernhardt as Phèdre

to the 'histrionic' or 'pantomime' style as it was frequently termed, that, in addition to her classical training, she had learnt from her 'Boulevard' years and which in some ways, as stated, was an equivalent to Ristori's 'picture-acting'. She used this style in highly successful 'saintly sinner' roles as diverse as Phèdre and Marguerite, relying on the excessive gestural style, to foreground pathos, rather than on her vocal ability, which, as was noted in her performances of Phèdre, proved inadequate and shrill, if required for long, emotional tirades. Yet whereas the sins of Marguerite or Phèdre could be offset by foregrounded pathos in attitudes of distress and supplication, Médée, as conceived by Mendès, lacks opportunity for the 'histrionics' of redeeming saintliness. Qualities which the critics praised were those such as her portrayal of voluptuous passion,³⁷ or the unrepentant laughter at the death of her victim, which Arsène described :

ce rire de Madame Sarah Bernhardt, nous l'entendrons longtemps résonner à nos oreilles, rire affolé et haletant, lorsque les nouvelles lui arrivaient de la mort de Créuse et de la réussite de ses enchantements! Rire fauvre et de femme outragée qui s'est vengée à souhait. 38

Yet none of these drew sympathy for the character, merely increased^{the} hostility of her reception.

Neither in this instance would Bernhardt's own star personality image have helped to conquer audience sympathy. In the case of Ristori, connotations of social respectability - specifically respect for the conventions of marriage and codes of sexual morality - were denoted by Ristori's own public image and contributed to the play's defence of the family and the roles of wife and mother. However, Bernhardt's own image of the sexually independent and morally unorthodox woman would merely serve to heighten the healthy, if not excessive, sexual appetite of Médée, comprising a very uncomfortable threat to middle class theatre audiences.

In short, Mendès's Médée, as conceived by him and interpreted by Bernhardt, reversed Legouvé's formula of seducer and seduced. Though not exactly a victim, Mendès's Jason has everything to fear from Médée³⁹ and is therefore deserving in sympathy. Bernhardt would perhaps have had greater success if she had used

Legouv  's text. She certainly could not have done worse, as the role was quickly dropped from her repertoire after only 23 performances.⁴⁰ In truth, she ought to have learnt the unacceptability of an antipathetic sinner, from her earlier attempts at playing another royal sinner, namely Cl  op  tre, the second figure of this study, which also met with hostility on the nineteenth-century stage.

Cleopatra

'The importance of the influence of Cleopatra, the beautiful and voluptuous, upon drama and the fine arts, is exemplified this present year to a more than usual extent', wrote a reviewer for the Theatre, in 1890.⁴¹ In that year, Cleopatra was portrayed on stages in both London and Paris, and was the subject of three paintings at the London Academy. The role of the fickle but irresistible queen of the Nile was one which attracted some of the most celebrated actresses in the last decade of the nineteenth century, though, it might be added, with little degree of success.

Aside from the demands the role made upon the actress's acting talents, the problem lay in how to equate her own stage image and physical beauty, with the culturally pre-conceived image, beauty and temperament of the Egyptian queen. Furthermore, the fatality of the queen was underlined by the 'decadent' imagination of the 1890's; 'She is a Baudelairean woman, a fleur du mal, she has what the decadents are fond of calling in their jargon an orchidaceous personality'.⁴² The renewed connotative emphasis on the dimension of the femme fatale, heightened the difficulty of the theatrical role. The actress had somehow to attract sympathy for a woman, who in spite of her royal birth, was little other than a professional courtisane, though far more dangerous because of her power.

Furthermore, in the first half of the nineteenth-century, the legendary image of Cleopatra was reworked to preach the sanctity of hearth and home, and the dangers of being seduced by such a temptress, so that late nineteenth-century Cleopatras inherited this note of moral censorship. Three examples from early nineteenth-century literature, will suffice to show the antipathetic qualities invested in the image.

Firstly, Alexandre Soumet's Cl  op  tre (1824),⁴³ depicts the corruption and

trickery of the queen so as to make Cléopâtre the perfect villain of the piece; her evil nature crowned in the fifth act by her murder of Octavie. An ignoble Antoine speaks of prostituting his glory at the feet of Cléopâtre, and the epilogue announces at her death, 'La reine courtisane est tombée'. Antoine does not even die with words of love on his lips, having discovered the murder of his wife :

Te pardonner, barbare!
La mort nous unissait, le crime nous sépare.
Épargne - moi ta vue à l'heure du trépas
Et l'invincible horreur d'expirer dans tes bras. 44

Cléopâtre has no sympathetic qualities. Her position as royal courtisane poses a threat to the values of motherhood, family and nation, all of which are embodied in Octavie and symbolically violated in her murder. Thematically, the drama is at pains to stress the positive qualities of the family and patriotism and attaches no grandeur and consequently no sympathy, to the topsy-turvy love of Cléopâtre for Antoine.

The second example is Théophile Gautier's short story, 'Une nuit de Cléopâtre',⁴⁵ which portrays the queen as an incarnation of love and luxury; 'La femme la plus complète qui ait jamais existé'. She is the visionary's objective correlative of an 'Ideal Beauty', but when ideals and realities clash, the male admirer must perish, content that he has given his life for the vision. Such is the story of Gautier's beautiful, pleasure seeking Cléopâtre who offers a single night of love to the besotted, androgynous, Meïamoun, in return for his life. The callous manner in which she dispatches her victim, in spite of the tear shed for his death, is emphasized as Cléopâtre turns her attention to the arrival of Marc Antoine, explaining away the deceased as an inconsequential occurrence.

Hence, the development of the Cleopatra image in early nineteenth-century French literature points towards an increasing connotative element of beauty and royalty used for egoistical and destructive ends; destructive both for the male victim who pays with his life and Cleopatra, who by destroying her love, destroys herself.

Small wonder, therefore, that the fiery, Catholic, M. Paul, in Charlotte Brontë's

novel Villette (1853), which has a French setting, should be anxious to steer the protestant heroine, Lucy Snowe, away from the 'indecent' portrait of Cleopatra in a local art gallery. He insists instead that she contemplate the four 'flat, dead, pale and formal', pictures, which together make up 'La vie d'une femme'.⁴⁶

In terms of the novel, the incident serves to contrast the genuine growing love of M. Paul for Lucy, with Dr Bretton's, that is to say, her English escort's, apparent attentions which ultimately prove less constant. Within this context, the image of Cleopatra is used as a vehicle to denote the reprehensible qualities of the indolent, pleasure seeking 'Beauty'. Lounging on a sofa, indecently clad and surrounded by 'untidiness' this 'dusky and portly Venus of the Nile', attracts the attention of the unworthy society fops, but is not to be openly tolerated by those whose judgement the reader respects, suspects and learns to respect, namely Lucy, Dr Bretton and M. Paul. The threat to the family unit, so revered by the Catholic faith, is also suggested in the image. As M. Paul states, Cleopatra is, 'Une femme superbe - une taille d'impératrice, des formes de Junon, mais une personne dont je ne voudrais ni pour femme, ni pour fille, ni pour soeur' (p.241).

Hence, the actress in the late nineteenth-century theatre, however talented, faced an almost insurmountable connotative antipathy invested in the image, as a legacy from the first part of the century.

First of the late nineteenth-century Cleopatras was Bernhardt's Cléopâtre which opened at the Porte Saint-Martin on 23 October 1890. Like her Médée this was a lavishly mounted production, with marvellous set designs, overseen by Félix Duquesnel, and with music by M. Xavier Leroux, which punctuated every dramatic entrance. The dramatic text was provided by Sardou, in collaboration with Emile Moreau, creating yet another 'Sardou/Bernhardt' box office draw. The play, loosely based on Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra mixed mythical signifiers of the legendary seducer with a tortuous love triangle, redolent of contemporary domestic, drawing-room, dialogues. To be seductive in her portrayal of the gipsy queen without outraging the sensibilities of her audience was one of the several difficulties Bernhardt faced in the role. Whilst Sardou's Cléopâtre gave her more scope for pathos and sympathy than the Médée of Mendès, she was not altogether successful at keeping



Bernhardt in Sardou's Cléopâtre

the critics on her side. As Gerda Taranow indicates, not everyone took to the 'serpentine movement' or 'pantomimic undulations' which she used to denote the seductive nature of the Egyptian queen.⁴⁷

In addition, the fact that as a queen, Cléopâtre has political power over men and is not governed by the will of a husband-king, was reflected in Bernhardt's own independent life-style, her freedom to choose, both in the theatre and in her unorthodox relations. Richard Findlater identifies these qualities as important signifiers of Bernhardt's exotic image, writing, 'It (Paris) was also, in middle class myth, the pulsating source of sin and pleasure, out of bounds : the capital of theatre- and the capital of sex. Sarah was an exotic, ipso facto , and far more exotic than the rest, both on and off stage.'⁴⁸ This combination of sexual and political power over men based on the image of the actress and character role, resulted in an overwhelming and antipathetic portrayal of female dominance.

Described as 'l'énigme vivante', 'le sphinx', 'la magicienne', Sardou's Cléopâtre embodies all the seductive attributes of the French courtisane . Unlike the professional courtisane , Cléopâtre has no need of money, and is even more terrifying as a woman who has economic as well as sexual power over men. Yet beauty is an important sexual weapon and like the courtisane Cléopâtre worries about growing old and being disarmed. She is concerned that she herself should die with her beauty intact, and like Feuillet's Blanche in Le sphinx, Sardou's Cléopâtre carries poison in her ring, for the moment when she is undone by her own trickery.

As to the composition of Sardou's drama, the structure is particularly weak, being little other than a three-pronged domestic triangle, with Antony as the husband unable to surrender his mistress in favour of the lawful love of his wife :

Laisse là cette enfant qui mérite mieux que sa destinée...Je me suis efforcé honnêtement de l'aimer pour chasser ton image par la sienne...Folie!...Jamais, quoi que j'en aie dit à l'instant, jamais je ne suis dérobé un seul jour à l'obsession de son souvenir! 49

Unlike Shakespeare's drama where Cleopatra the woman, jealously in love, is offset by Cleopatra the queen, Sardou upsets the balance by concentrating exhaustively on Cleopatra the woman and her domestic squabbles. Strip away the outward trappings

of nobility and what is left are the concerns and prejudices of the demi-monde. Antoine's position is no different to Gaussin's in Daudet's Sapho, except that Gaussin has a less fickle partner in Fanny, than Antoine does in the 'unsaintly sinner', Cléopâtre.

Though critical opinion generally conceded that Sardou's plays were not works of great literary merit, in performance they were hugely successful owing to Bernhardt's talent and box office popularity. Audience expectations were running high, prior to the Cléopâtre production, firstly because of the celebrity of the Sardou-Bernhardt partnership and secondly because of the magnetism of the Cleopatra figure; 'a personage who has impressed popular imagination in all ages and whose name has cast a spell on successive generations'.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, reality did not match up to expectation. Vocally, Bernhardt betrayed her boredom with the text, only displaying the 'golden' tones when her interest was spasmodically aroused, for example in her venting of anger on Antony's desertion, which the Paris correspondent for the Era described as a welcome relief from the general monotony, and perhaps atoned for the vulgar belly dancing in the Egyptian scenes, to which he took strong exception.⁵¹ Neither was her appearance particularly becoming as she chose to signify the Egyptian by a bronzed skin, crowned with a flowing mop of red hair, at odds with the popular image of Cleopatra with jet-black hair.

Sarcey, who overall, described the production as 'une féerie, pseudo-historique, avec un morceau de bravoure à chaque tableau pour la prima donna',⁵² noted Bernhardt's better moments, as those in which she was responsible for 'translating' the ideas of the playwright by movement and gesture, rather than by expensive décor. As an example, he cited the initial seduction scene between the lovers and identified the progression of their relationship in the signification of the player's movements; movements by which the two narrowed the distance between each other and ended up seated on the same cushion, signifying their potential union.⁵³ Such moments, in conjunction with her style of 'pantomime', in the messenger or eavesdropping scene, were isolated tableaux of merit, in a production, which generally, Sarcey very much regretted.

In keeping with her 'pantomime' style and recourse to pathos signified by

excessive gestural tableaux, she made the most of the death scene. Dying alone and in the grand manner, provided the actress with the traditional, golden opportunity for drawing tears and sympathy in a glamorous end. ^{Bernhardt} I reflected her taste for sensational stage effects, by using a real snake, which she slipped into a concealed pocket in the top of her dress. The sensationalism of this final scene fell flat, according to the Era, as the 'gentle end' was a long time in coming; a view with which The Times concurred, stating, 'the little green serpent is disgusting rather than striking, and Cleopatra's death causes no anguish, because Antony being dead she cannot survive him. This prolonged agony is a mistake, and the wind-up is not thrilling'. ⁵⁴ Hector Pessard noted that events had taken so long to depict, that Sardou had finally killed off Antony and Cleopatra within the same hour, having run out of time, ⁵⁵ and none of the French critics approved of the snake, which detracted from Bernhardt's performance. Wolff made sarcastic comments about fin de siècle realism coming to Cléopâtre, ⁵⁶ and Sarcey claimed the emotion of the moment was spoilt anyway by a woman in the balcony screaming when the snake was produced. ⁵⁷ Hence, in spite of the Paris audiences who flocked to see their favourite actress, overall the critics, English and French, were not pleased, though if all else failed, there was always Leroux's music or the marvellous scenery to enjoy.

The scenic displays of Mrs Langtry's Cleopatra which took place the following month at the Princess theatre, were about all critics could find to praise. Coming so soon after Bernhardt's performance, comparisons were inevitable. The Daily Telegraph observed that in both productions the emphasis on spectacle dwarfed the acting. ⁵⁸ However, Langtry's Cleopatra was not the 'fascinating serpent-like sensualist', like Bernhardt's, 'but rather a woman with alternate aspects of weakness and energy, with a gentleness in her beguiling and a touch of heroism in her passion'. ⁵⁹

Critics speculated as to why Mrs Langtry should undertake such a role, when her talents were clearly no match for its demands and whilst expectations had run high at Bernhardt's performance, now it was generally anticipated that the actress would not succeed in the part. 'Mrs Langtry's Cleopatra is not to be described as a disappointment', wrote the reviewer for the Speaker, 'for the judicious can



Bernhardt in Sardou's Cléopâtre : The Death Scene

have found nothing in the lady's previous career to warrant the expectation that she could play the part'.⁶⁰ Vocally, her 'thin, inflexible voice' was inadequate for regal delivery and her scenes of coquetry, rated amongst her finer moments, belonged to 'modern Mayfair', rather than to antiquity.⁶¹ In short, her public, high-profiled, society image obtruded into and interrupted a performance which was only successful in non-vocal moments, when spectators were invited to admire her beauty; notably the 'sculptural beauty of her picture of Cleopatra in death'.⁶²

Because Langtry's Cleopatra was a vision and not a performance; because she did not present the Egyptian queen, but only projected an image of her beautiful self, it was only in terms of self-denoted object, that critics could appraise her. None denied that she was stunning in her splendid sequence of costumes, with her head of 'sunny brown hair' and ivory skin, which was rather pale for a sun-bronzed queen of the Nile. Yet this was not Cleopatra; 'She looked beautiful. She will photograph admirably. She was the centre of innumerable lovely pictures, but it was not Cleopatra, unless, indeed, in process of time the "serpent of the Old Nile" has turned herself into a medieval saint'.⁶³ Looking, as the Daily Telegraph opined, like 'one of the jewelled female saints we see in the ikons in Greek churches',⁶⁴ her beauty had nothing in common with the Egyptian queen. 'Incongruous' was American critic, William Winter's word for it; 'no more like the character than an icicle is like a skyrocket'.⁶⁵

Yet this was a less grievous fault than her 'miscalculated dramatic strength',⁶⁶ which transformed the royal seducer into a 'frightened fawn'. Offering herself up as an object on public display, was in itself a means of denoting woman as a passive object to be viewed. Her queen had more in common with a dependent grisette frightened of losing her lover, than an alluring, dominant Egyptian siren. This totally upset the balance of power in her relationship with Antony, played by Mr Coghlan. Whatever the objections to Sarah's 'serpentine' undulations, her seductive manner at least made Antony's defeat and submission an inevitability, whereas Langtry would never command her captive's heart :

Poor Cleopatra, in her lovely dresses, was as meek as a mouse, when she tried

to get angry, no one believed in her temper, when she scolded, everyone wished she would smile again, for the voice would not answer to the call of its owner, and the face looked so much prettier in repose than when distorted and swollen with passion. 67

That an actress noted for her society connections rather than talent, could only manage a performance that was 'artificial, commonplace and unconvincing', 68 did not surprise the critics, merely fulfilled their expectations and brought ^{out} the commonplace platitude of a mortal actress never being able to play the immortal seducer-queen.

The platitude reappeared again on the occasion of Duse's Cleopatra at the Lyric in June 1893, which received uniformly bad reviews (with the exception of the Pall Mall Gazette). Even some of her customary admirers could find little, if anything, to praise. Shaw asked, 'who on earth would know that Duse was a great actress if he had never seen her play anything but Cleopatra?' 69 and A.B. Walkley expressed distress at 'seeing an actress, who has given me more pleasure than any other alive, coming to hopeless grief'. 70

Having complained of the excesses of Langtry's scenery, now some took exception to Duse's lack of it. Neither were the critics generally happy with Shakespeare in Italian. Like Bernhardt's adaptation, Duse's Italian version, placed greater emphasis on the Egyptian scenes at the expense of the Roman. William Archer suggested that,

If she could read Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra she would either drop the part altogether from her repertory or act it very differently. She would realize that the play is not a badly-constructed domestic drama in outlandish costumes, but a glorious love-poem, portraying and celebrating that all-absorbing passion for which the world is well lost. 71

The severest criticisms were levelled at her conception of the character.

Exceptionally the Pall Mall Gazette argued that Duse's characteristically 'natural, reserved, tranquil' style, made a far greater Cleopatra than the general, contemporary tendency to be 'theatrical, exaggerated' or 'restless' in the part. 72 This was however an isolated opinion. The majority found her manner of playing to the intellect



Duse's Cleopatra



and not to the heart, incompatible with the popular conception of Cleopatra :

Her Cleopatra is a paradox incarnate, a contradiction in terms; for cold fire is not more inconceivable than a passionless Cleopatra. There is nothing in the least voluptuous, sensuous, languorous about her performance. Her very embraces are chilly and she kisses like a canary bird. (Archer, p.175)

The review in the Daily Telegraph engaged in the most detailed analysis of the incongruity of Duse's face, which registered every emotion except 'passionate self-abandonment' and style characterised by 'reasoned restraint and meditative thoughtfulness', trying to display the 'wanton excesses' of the Egyptian queen.⁷³ For example, the reviewer continues, Antony claims Cleopatra does not know the meaning of temperance, whilst Duse is an actress 'whose chief gift is temperance'. As in the case of her Marguerite, Duse conceived a character that had little to do with the dramatist's conception, but came from her own interpretation of a woman in love. In moments of happiness she restrained her passion but in adversity unleashed it, so that by the end of the performance, at least her interpretation became 'readable' or understandable as, 'a real feminine character, whose heart, it is true, did not always beat with the wild spasmodic throbs which rent the frame of Cleopatra, but whose nature was real flesh and blood, after all - a living, loving, tender and adorable woman'.⁷⁴ There were moments when Duse's unmade-up face, which functioned as a key locus of emotional registers, superbly foregrounded the emotionality of the role, as in the death scene, which captivated her audience :

The face, with its set purpose growing upon it, was a study. The feverish desire to join the dead glowed in eyes that were sunken with grief, and from the moment when, with 'come, thou mortal wretch', she placed the asp in her bosom, there was a sense of awe stealing over the audience that held them until the curtain silently fell on the dead Queen of Egypt.⁷⁵

There were none of Bernhardt's sensational effects with live snakes but a simple and effective miming of the fatal bite, which did not detract from concentration on the anguish of the actress's face, speech and gesture.

Whilst there were moments, such as the death scene, where Duse's unadorned

set, and absence of stage effects, successfully concentrated attention on her person, overall, her physique was considered incompatible with the role. While Langtry had been acknowledged as a modern, but decidedly not an 'antique' beauty queen, Duse's personal beauty, was generally considered as one of her weaker points, though the Era suggested it would suffice for Plutarch's description of Cleopatra as 'not so passing as to be unmatchable of other women'.⁷⁶ The Star more scathingly declared that 'the external Cleopatra was a very poor figure of a woman', was not taken with the olive tint given to her skin, or her 'uncomeliness and her incongruous swathes and trappings', in which she was costumed.⁷⁷ Her voice was declared to be detrimentally hoarser than usual, and there were protests at her standing on tip-toe as an expression of 'regal dignity' and means of ensnaring Antony.⁷⁸ As to the latter, played by Flavio Ando, the Era suggested that the star system of Duse's production did not provide a good Antony, or Octavius. Just as Cleopatra must be a fearful seducer, Antony must also be a worthy prize, and Duse's Antony, who displayed 'touches of Italian effeminacy',⁷⁹ and had a slight, but noticeable stoop, did not assist in the illusion of masculine nobility.

Ben Greet's management of Shakespearean productions in 1897 moved away from the star system and aimed at providing 'Shakespeare at popular prices', without stars, lavish scenery or music. He combined his management with the talents of the 'Independent Theatre' and produced a version of Antony and Cleopatra in his Shakespearean repertoire, with the actress, Janet Achurch (the 1895, Mercy Merrick), as Cleopatra. The play was staged at the Queen's theatre Manchester in March 1897 and transferred to the Olympic, London, two months later.

Janet Achurch was recognized as an actress of the 'new' and had an acting style developed from her performances of Ibsen, that was not entirely suited to Shakespeare. Her 'tricks of style which pass as inspiration in Ibsen', wrote the reviewer for The Times, are 'unfortunate' in her Cleopatra, 'who is neurotic, quixotic, soulful, and absolutely destitute of charm'.⁸⁰ However, certain of her qualities recommended her for the part. The Daily Chronicle pointed out that, 'she is a devoted student of the intellectual drama, and she possesses style, earnestness and command of passion. These are indispensable to a satisfactory interpretation

of Cleopatra, without being all that is required'.⁸¹ Yet the 'something else' which she lacked and the role required, was the necessary 'subtle witchery' of the enchantress, which gave her power over her male victim. As a result, Achurch's Antony, played by Mr Louis Calvert, tended to appear the seducer.

Others argued that like Duse, she was hampered in the role by the 'individuality' of her style,⁸² and the incongruity of her physique, which Shaw described as the 'Broad-browed, column-necked, Germanic type - the Wagner heroine type'.⁸³ Neither would her vocal chords stretch happily to registers of regal anger, which tended to become 'discordant' in emotional displays.

Shaw's reviews of her performance are particularly interesting, though coloured by personal animosity at their thwarted love affair and Achurch's constant state of penury, due, in no small measure, to her inability to keep away from double brandys.⁸⁴ That he could envisage her surrendering her painful striving towards a 'new' style to the quick success, rhetoric-recipe of the 'old', pervades his reviews of the London production, in which he detected a mixture of styles and influences. He expresses his fear that :

she will become an English Sarah Bernhardt. The process is already far advanced. On Monday last she sweeping about, clothed with red Rossettian hair and beauty to match; revelling in the power of her voice and the steam pressure of her energy; curving her wrists elegantly above Antony's head as if she were going to extract a globe of gold fish and two rabbits from behind his ear; and generally celebrating her choice between the rare and costly art of being beautifully natural in lifelike human acting, like Duse, and the comparatively common and cheap one of being theatrically beautiful in heroic stage exhibition. (Shaw, III, pp.146-7)

Typical of her theatrical tricks was the messenger scene. Having questioned the messenger about Octavia's charms, she remains alone on the stage and à la Bernhardt stagecraft, 'takes a mirror, looks critically at her own features, then throws herself on her couch, hugging the mirror to her breast, in an ecstasy of glory, a passion of pride, embracing her own beauty'.⁸⁵

A death scene in the grand manner, as stated, could provide sufficient pathos and dramatic impact to atone for all sins, including deficiencies in acting ability. The Westminster Gazette described Achurch's death scene as the demise of a 'passionate,

whimsical creature', as opposed to that of a 'marvellous poetical wanton queen',⁸⁶ though Shaw prophesied that her 'unforgettable statue death for Cleopatra' would atone for all her 'sins against Shakespear' (Shaw, III, p.83).

The disparity between expectations and reality which had dogged some of the most talented actresses in the role of Cleopatra, proved nowhere more glaring than in the Benson's production in March 1900 at the Lyceum. Neither Mrs Benson as Cleopatra, nor the production as a whole, came near to an approximation of the mythical lovers. As Max Beerbohm grieved :

There is a score of ideal Hamlets, of ideal Lady Macbeths. But Antony and Cleopatra are 'fixed' for me. They must be superb figures both. Through the mists of their tragic and stupendous passion, they must loom over me, as it were, rather more than life-size...In other words, both must be tremendous embodiments - noble monsters - of tragic passion. ⁸⁷

Like Ben Greet's production, the Benson management had a stock company policy, with actors and actresses taking parts of various importance in different productions. Of Mrs Benson's Cleopatra, little could be said in her favour. Some tempered criticisms with platitudinous lines such as, 'with the temperament conferred on her by nature she does wonderfully well', ⁸⁸ or she was 'refined rather than powerful'.⁸⁹ All however, would probably agree that her temperament was entirely incompatible with the role as 'there is nothing of the uncanny, diabolic fantasy of the orchid in Mrs Benson',⁹⁰ and some were totally uncompromising in their judgement. like Beerbohm's, 'the shadow of an automaton would have been more welcome' (p.256), or the Pall Mall Gazette's 'aspic' criticism :

Mrs Benson was a viperous Cleopatra. The serpent of the old Nile seemed in her hands to have lost all its attributes except its power to sting. 'Have I the aspic in my lips?' says Cleopatra as Iras falls dead after kissing her, and the question seemed so natural and the answer so necessarily in the affirmative that we wondered Mark Antony had not long since died in the same manner as Iras ⁹¹

That spectacle, strong leading performances and an emphasis on the Egyptian that did not degenerate into the squabbles of a sordid, domestic, love triangle, could^{be} successfully combined, was demonstrated in actor manager, Herbert Beerbohm

Tree's production at His Majesty's, December 1906. To present the 'treatment of "sexual infatuation" in the grand style', required the 'unity of impression' that Egypt and love are all. Hence, 'a dissolving vision of the sphinx opens and closes the play. Weird nerve-thrilling Oriental strains are in the air. You hear those same strains even in Rome or Athens - on the Wagnerian plane - whenever Antony's thoughts turn to the far-away Cleopatra'.⁹² With scenic display, music and ballets to conjure images of 'oriental luxury and vice', and a more than adequate Cleopatra, in the shape of Constance Collier, as their chief signifier, this 1906 production was highly rated. A few dissenting voices found fault with Miss Collier's insufficient charm,⁹³ or her passion, lacking in conviction,⁹⁴ but were minor compared to the praise for her acting of the messenger scenes, 'her dark-skinned, barbaric' dominance, unleashing a 'tiger's cruelty' from 'under the sleek skin of the cultivated woman'.⁹⁵ The detailed review from The Times of her contribution to the production is most useful to this study, both as an indication of the general critical opinion of Miss Collier and as a general summation of the problems for actresses performing the role :

Everything in the play depends upon her. It is a terribly exacting part for any actress. She must have beauty, of course, and, what is even more important, she must have glamour. She must be able to run, at a rapid sweep, through the whole gamut of emotion - from dove-like cooings to the rage of a tigress, from voluptuous languor to passion all aflame, from the frenzy of a virago to the calm and statuesque majesty of one of the noblest death-scenes in all Shakespeare. It is a great ordeal for Miss Constance Collier. One trembled for her beforehand, but quite needlessly as it turns out, for she not only looks but plays the part splendidly...Now she writhes, clings, caresses, then quivers and flashes with jealous rage, at last to compose herself into a set, marmorean clam. An occasional false intonation - that is to say, a touch of our modern 'fine-spoken' accent, which jars against the music of Shakespearian verse - is the only blemish in what is on the whole, as Enobarbus says of the Queen 'a wonderful piece of work'.⁹⁶

The severity of criticism levelled at dramatic representations of Cleopatra, whether production length, heavy-handed displays, or the miscasting of the leading roles, is a reflection not only on the players and producers, but is also indicative of a reluctance to being 'seduced'. Like M. Paul who described Cleopatra as a 'femme superbe', the spectator acknowledges the magnetism, but concedes that she is unacceptable as a wife, mother or sister. She is made for loving but not



Miss Constance Collier in the 'messenger scene'; Illustration from the
Play Pictorial, volume ix, 1907

for marrying, though the exoticism of the former has a far greater magnetism. The formal images of wifely virtue that society condones and that Lucy was obliged to contemplate, are in themselves testimony to the fascination for the antithetical, outlawed, image of voluptuous beauty.

Both Cleopatra and Medea make significant contributions to images of seducing and seduced women on the nineteenth century stage. Legouv  's reworking of 'antique' infanticide into a sympathetic portrayal of the abandoned woman was a surprising and adventurous project, which owed much of its success to Ristori. In current stage history, the success has been repeated by another Italian actress, Franca Rame, who, like Legouv  , takes the myth as a vehicle for a modern concern in her one woman version of Medea,⁹⁷ reworking it to demonstrate a feminist reading of the burden of children on a woman's development and independence.

As for Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, companies continue to do battle with the problems of staging the 'spectacular epic'. Now, as a seductive equivalent to Bernhardt's outrageous 'serpentine' movements denoting sexuality, the modern 'black-maned' Cleopatra must resort to biting 'her lover's tongue' and caressing 'her skin with oyster juice'.⁹⁸ Criticisms of the inability of the mortal actress to match up to the immortal legend, remain, however, the same.

Notes to Chapter 3 : Outcast Queen and Royal Seducer : Medea and Cleopatra

1. Adelaide Ristori, Studies and Memoirs (London : W.H. Allen, 1888), chapter IX, 'Medea', pp.199-224 (p.202). All subsequent references are to this edition and given in the text.
2. Indication of Medea's unpopularity may be gauged by considering the versions in the history of the Com  die Fran  aise, detailed in A. Joannid  s, La Com  die Fran  aise de 1600    1900 (New York : Burt Franklin, 1971). Corneille had borrowed from both Euripides and Seneca for his M  d  e (1635). It was first performed at the Com  die Fran  aise in 1763, when it was given two performances and in the nineteenth century, it was only performed in 1868 (4 performances) and 1871 (2 performances). There were two other French M  d  e's, one by Longepierre (1694), which met with a little more success and remained in the national theatre's repertoire until the first decade of the nineteenth century, and a version by Cl  ment (1779) which does not appear in the Com  die's repertoire, after its initial performance. The versions by Euripides and Seneca are not included at all in the repertoire prior to 1900.
3. In, Th   tre complet : pi  ces en vers (Paris : Didier, 1873). All page references to the preface and play will be from this edition.

4. Spectator, 13 June 1857, p.624.
5. Henry Knepler The Gilded Stage (London : Constable, 1968), pp.62-3.
6. For contemporary reviews of London performances of these roles, see Henry Morley, The Journal of a London Playgoer (Leicester : Leicester University Press, 1974).
7. Spectator, 7 June 1856, p.609.
8. 5 June 1856, p.12.
9. For my description of the group, as housed in the nineteenth century, an old catalogue of the Uffizi Gallery was consulted, published in Florence, 1897.
10. According to legend, Niobe was punished by her sister Latona, for boasting of the largeness of her family. Latona had only two children, Apollo and Diana, whom she arranged to have kill Niobe's offspring. Apollo killed the sons; Diana the daughters. Niobe's grief then turned her to stone.
11. For example, see Jouvin's review of the original production, Le Figaro, 13 April 1856, p.7.
12. 5 June 1856, p.12.
13. Ibid. The Italian text is also described by Paul de Saint-Victor, La Presse, 13 April 1856, p.1, as 'seductive' to the French ear.
14. Published by Samuel French, New York, 1857.
15. The term is Anne Cluysenaar's, from her, Introduction to Literary Stylistics (London : B.T. Batsford, 1976) chapter 2, with reference to 'dominant structures' in the translation of literary texts.
16. 'Miss Bateman at the Lyceum', The Times, 10 July 1872, p.10.
17. The Times, 6 November 1861, p.10.
18. Ibid.
19. Daily Telegraph, 6 November 1861, p.3.
20. Daily Telegraph, 11 July 1872, p.2.
21. 11 July 1872, p.12.
22. 20 July 1872, 910-911 (p.910).
23. Ibid.
24. 10 July 1872, p.10.
25. 20 July 1872, p.911.
26. For further details of Miss Ward's career and friendship with Ristori, see Both Sides of the Curtain by Geneviève Ward and Richard Whiteing (London : Cassell, 1918).
27. 5 March 1883, p.5.
28. The Times, 5 March 1883, p.7.

29. 5 March 1883, p.2.
30. 10 March 1883, p.7.
31. Médée (Paris : Charpentier, 1898), Act 2, p.109. All page references refer to this edition.
32. The term is Taranow's (1972), p.124.
33. For example, compare Taranow (1972), quoting Stoullig's description of Bernhardt's gesture, from, Les annales du théâtre : 1898 (Paris:Ollendorff, 1899), pp.367-8, with Morley's description of Ristori's style in The Journal of a London Playgoer :

Although in describing gesture, critics rarely separate hands from arms, the actress's hands were nevertheless praised in an 1898 review of her performance in Catulle Mendès's Médée... 'Her slightest gestures have meaning, and her hands, her very hands, are as expressive as her face!'. (pp.97-8)

We may say in England, that the usual Italian way of acting, not with the hands only, but even with the fingers, fails of effect; and even seems - not that it therefore is - ungraceful to a London audience. (p.124)
34. Le Théâtre, no. 11 (November 1898), 2-6 (p.6).
35. (November 1898), 317-8, (p.318).
36. Ibid.
37. See J. Gascogne, La Libre Parole, October 29 1898.
38. Le Théâtre, November 1898, p.6.
39. In the text, Crœon cites Jason's fear of Médée, stating, 'Il t'aima! mais (ceci te soit dit sans offense), Tu l'effrayais un peu, par ta force et ton art!' (I.p.40).
40. See Taranow (1972), p.128.
41. December, p.297.
42. The Times, 30 March 1900, p.6.
43. Soumet's version was performed by Mlle George. There was one other version in the first part of the century, written by Mme Girardin and performed by Rachel.
44. Cléopâtre (Paris : Tresse, 1846), V.6. p.92.
45. The short story appeared originally in editions of La Presse, November - December 1838 and was then published in a collection of Nouvelles (1845). The version consulted here, was that in, Oeuvres de Théophile Gautier : Nouvelles (Paris : Lemerre, 1897).
46. Villette, modern edition (London : Heron, 1968), chapter XIX, 'The Cleopatra', p.238. Subsequent references are from this edition.
47. Taranow (1972), pp.107-8.
48. 'Bernhardt and the British Player Queens', in, Bernhardt and the Theatre of Her Time, edited by Eric Salmon (London : Greenwood, 1977), pp.91-109 (p.94).
49. Cléopâtre, in Théâtre complet, IV, Act IV.s.8.p.327.
50. The Times, 24 October 1890, p.3.

51. 1 November 1890, p.11. The French critics did not take exception, having seen demonstrations of belly dancing the previous year at the Exposition Universelle.
52. Le Temps 27 October 1890, 1-2 (p.1).
53. Ibid.
54. 24 October 1890, p.3.
55. Le Gaulois, 24 October 1890, p.3.
56. Le Figaro, 24 October 1890, p.2.
57. Le Temps, 27 October 1890, p.2.
58. 19 November 1890, p.3.
59. Daily Chronicle, 19 November 1890, p.3.
60. 22 November 1890, p. 576.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Daily Telegraph, 19 November 1890, p.3.
64. Ibid.
65. William Winter, Shakespeare on the Stage, third series (New York, London : Benjamin Blom, 1916; reissued 1969), p.453.
66. Theatre, December 1890, p.287.
67. Daily Telegraph, 19 November 1890, p.3.
68. Pall Mall Gazette, 19 November 1890, p.2.
69. Out Theatre in the Nineties, I, p.144.
70. Speaker, 24 June 1893, p.717.
71. Theatrical World for 1893, p.172.
72. 20 June 1893, p.4.
73. 20 June 1893, p.3.
74. Ibid.
75. Daily Chronicle, 20 June 1893, p.3.
76. 24 June 1893, p.6.
77. 20 June 1893, p.3.
78. See Speaker, 24 June 1893, and Star, ibid.
79. Era, 24 June 1893, p.6.
80. 28 May 1897, p.3.

81. 25 May 1897, p.3.
82. For example, see, Westminster Gazette, 25 May 1897, p.3.
83. Our Theatre in the Nineties, III, p.79.
84. For details of their stormy relations see, Margot Peters Bernard Shaw and the Actresses (New York : Doubleday, 1980).
85. Star, 25 May 1897, p.1.
86. 25 May 1897, p.3.
87. More Theatres (London : Rupert Hart Davis , 1969), p.255.
88. The Times, 30 March 1900, p.6.
89. Daily Chronicle, 30 March 1900, p.5.
90. The Times, 30 March 1900, p.6.
91. 30 March 1900, p.8.
92. The Times, 28 December 1906, p.3.
93. Westminster Gazette, 28 December 1906, p.3.
94. Star, 28 December 1906, p.1.
95. Daily Telegraph, 28 December 1906, p.12.
96. 28 December 1906, p.3.
97. Published in the collection, Female Parts : One Woman Plays (London : Pluto Press, 1981).
98. The modern criticism is from Michael Billington's review of Diana Rigg as Cleopatra, at the Chichester Festival theatre, 1985, reviewed in the Guardian, 17 May 1985.

Chapter 4 : Melodrama's Dangerous Women

While 'serious' drama had its courtisanes, sinners and Magdalens to offer, late nineteenth-century, English, popular theatre, made its own contribution to the 'outcast' type. She was the dangerous woman featured in the melodrama created by the two theatrical brothers, Frederick and Walter Melville. Their plays, containing the most diabolical of women, were performed mainly at the Terriss, Rotherhithe and the Standard, Hoxton, around the turn of the century. The melodramas demonstrate a lively range of every type of outcast; fallen woman, adventuress, seductress, and so on, and it is for this selection of dangerous women that the Melville melodrama achieved popular success and for which it is now, albeit vaguely, remembered.

Secondary sources are minimal, given that reviewers considered popular theatre unworthy of comment, and the productions were shunned by all the usual drama columns, with the exception of the Era or the occasional citation in the weekly tabloid, News of the World. Neither were the plays themselves published. Consequently study of the melodrama's villainess, is only possible via consideration of the manuscripts registered in the Lord Chamberlain's Collection. A sample range of these plays, ¹ beginning with Walter Melville's first big success, The Worst Woman in London (1899), will provide a means of understanding the function, role, and signification of this dangerous, siren-figure.

All the plays were written in four acts, in turn divided into four or five scenes. Structurally, they balanced the peripatetic fortunes of the hero(s) and heroine(s) with the interludes of comic buffoonery, instigated by servant, working class characters (usually a couple) who, besides punctuating the mood of the play, also helped the good protagonists in overcoming their adverseries. Of necessity, the first act constituted a lengthy exposition, presenting most of the characters and their inter-relationships. Frequently, the first scene introduced the 'poor' characters and transferred to the 'rich' characters in the second scene, developing an interacting conflict between the two. The second and third acts pursued

the complexities of the conflict, introducing catastrophic reversals of fortune, multiple crimes, for which the innocent parties were inevitably accused, and resolving the action in a comparatively shorter fourth act, in which poetic justice was administered. Given the numerous and often incredible interactions between characters, there were many information giving speeches, in order to keep the audience abreast of who was who and who was doing what to whom.²

The popularity of the melodrama rested on the villains and in particular the villainess. 'Heroines of modern melodrama are as unattractive as the heroes, and goodness knows they are dull enough', wrote one reviewer, 'No I like the villain, the adventuress and the jolly little servant who later becomes a music hall star'.³

Given the established format of the melodrama, a high degree of audience for knowledge was involved in this type of popular theatre. The Melville's capitalized on this by coining titles which made the villainess the central subject, regardless of whether the title adequately described the action to follow, or not. The use of superlatives in a title, the 'ugliest' or the 'worst', or the disreputable connotations inspired by A Disgrace to Her Sex or The Bad Girl of the Family, unashamedly announced an explicit and principal interest in wicked and immoral women. M. Willson Disher in his chapter on Melvillian melodrama, describes the way in which posters were also used to contribute to this signification of the diabolical woman :

Hoardings advertised that the Melville's dramas would be daring. They brought colour to our cheeks as well as to our streets. There was never anything improper about them, but they alarmed those who disapproved of "the sensational". The titles were alarming in themselves even without the more than life-size figures that illustrated them. There were never such posters before or since. Usually an accusing finger created a centre of interest in a colour-scheme of yellow and red surrounding one or two arresting female figures.⁴

The 'larger than life' dimension was made a reality within a performance context, given that the Melvilles chose powerful actresses for the leading roles; 'sometimes good-looking but always of powerful physique' (Disher, p.168). The dangerous woman, often a social climber, seeking power and fortune, or else an established,

wealthy siren, using her powers to corrupt others and invite them to take a wrong turning, works in league with male accomplices. Sometimes it is a partnership, but more frequently is a tricky trio of villains, which permits a greater and more incredible interaction of criminal doings. Whatever the combination, it is the woman who takes the lead and constitutes a very fearsome opponent. Disher, for instance, describes the performance of Olga Audré, in the 1903 revival of The Worst Woman in London :

Olga Audré (formerly Audrey) entered as the murderess, in her nightdress, but she was not mocked. The Worst Woman in London was then a fine upstanding well-built girl in her twenties and her bearing - unlike anything today when the young stay young - was adult and imperious. You feared for her victims and were glad when they escaped on the stage. (p.171)

The aim of the actress was to fascinate, thrill and even terrorize her audience:

Miss Olga Audré is admirably suited to the title-rôle, and gives to Francis Vere a fascination, and an intensity that are enthralling. She looks very charming in some rich and well-made costumes, and one can easily understand how effective the wiles of such an adventuress as Miss Audré represents could be. Her chances are great in the bedroom scene, where the wife murders her husband. Miss Audré's expression of terror when in the madman's clutches is convincing, and quite disturbing to even the most hardened playgoer, who must be affected by the thrilling realism of her embodiment. There are but few actresses who could play the part so well. 5

An all too familiar vitriolic vocabulary to describe the temptress emerges, with the emphasis more weighted now on the diabolical than the beautiful. As the 'Worst Woman in London', the evil Francis Vere (described in the manuscript as 'Heavy Lady') is called a 'spider', 'wanton', 'degraded sinner' and 'some demon in womanly form'. Her own father denounces her as evil, stating, 'the only mistake I made was that I didn't strangle you at your birth'. 6

In Between Two Women (1902), the wealthy Harry Millard is the man caught between the good Violet and the bad Carmen de Severaux. The opposition between good and evil is immediately denoted by Frederick Melville's use of proper names. The world of the ordinary and innocent, Violets, Ruths, Mildreds and Mabels, contrast^s starkly with the exotic and evil magnetism of the Carmen de Severaux's, the Vesta



Cartoon of Walter Melville's 'Drama Factory'

Le Cleres or the Francis Veres. The use of proper names to establish the good and bad parties was a recognized convention, as Beerbohm describes on the occasion of the première of Between Two Women, which so excited his painter-companion, stating that, 'my guide praised the choice of names - "Frederick Melville", he said, "May always be trusted in the choice of names"'.⁷ Described as a 'woman who drinks to the full from a man's life and who afterwards throws him on one side like an empty vessel' (I.p.15), Carmen lives in the most fiendish and dangerous (dangerous for the male victim, that is), surroundings. Her abode is described as,

the lap of luxury and vice, a palace which is supported by the debauched and depraved. Since the days of Cermorne nothing more brilliant and wicked has been allowed to grow and exist in our midst. The authorities either refuse to interfere or know nothing of its existence and this Carmen is queen of all its Sirens, it would be unwise even dangerous to venture there on such an errand. (III. p.92)

Lavish scenery, such as that used for Carmen's rooms, was a hallmark of every production and played a significant, visual role in the contagion of excitement. The News of the World, for example, described Between Two Women as constructed with 'all that goes to touch the feelings, to excite the senses', pinpointing the 'striking scenery',⁸ as did the Era in its unstinting description of the 'lavishly mounted' and 'elaborate' sets.⁹

The Ugliest Woman on Earth (1904), heralded by a poster depicting a most mysterious, heavily veiled, leading lady, was sufficiently striking in its title and illustration, to arouse widespread curiosity as to the nature of the woman's deformity, which is never clearly explained from start to finish. In fact, the title is highly misleading, for the 'U.W.O.E.', is not the villainess of the play but a much abused victim, given her unfortunate deformity and the attempts of the villainous character, Gold, to have her arrested for a murder she did not commit, though she had wounded her opponent, supposedly Gold's brother, while defending her honour. The temptress in this melodrama is in fact Rose Courtenay, a woman who has the power to, 'break men's hearts and then laugh at the power she has' (Act II). She fails to win the hero, Jack Merriman, whom she must marry in order to inherit a deceased

uncle's fortune. Jack flees from her evil powers into the arms of the 'U.W.O.E.' whose 'soul' he has learnt to love. Miss Henrietta Watson had the unenviable task of playing the 'U.W.O.E.' and coping with a four act performance in which her face was completely hidden from view :

The difficulty of her task, however, was cleverly overcome, and her impersonation throughout was dignified and impressive, especially pathetic being her acting in the scene where she raises her veil and looks in the mirror. A more finished or sympathetic rendering of the part could not be imagined, and Miss Watson is to be warmly complimented on her portrayal of a character which, in less experienced or gifted hands, could easily have been made ludicrous. 10

Like Carmen de Severaux, Val Raymond in The Girl Who Wrecked him Home (1907), is also depicted as a type of diabolical Madame figure, who earns a living in London by attracting wealthy young suitors and then blackmailing them with their immoral and frivolous existences, and driving them to the point of suicide. Vesta le Clere in The Girl Who Took The Wrong Turning (1906), is yet another siren-figure who earns her living by fatally attracting young men. In both cases the women also earn enough from their victims to support their male partners in crime and though not openly stated, these women, by implication, are high class prostitutes. Played by the Melville's most popular villainess, Olga Audré, Vesta le Clere made a particularly formidable opponent ; 'Well versed in depicting the unscrupulous adventuress of melodrama', Miss Olga Audré added yet another dangerous woman 'to her triumphs in this special line of business'.¹¹ Her role demanded that she not only corrupt her male victims, but also influence young, innocent women to take the 'wrong turning', in effect schooling them in the art of prostitution.

However, in spite of the power attributed to such evil seductresses, their male victims are not always easily or persistently duped by their deceptive natures and evil practices. The sudden recognition on the part of the male victim, that trickery is afoot, necessitates a change of tactic on the part of the villainess, and constitutes a further means of increasing the complexity of the action.

In The Worst Woman In London, Francis actually manages to ensnare and marry

Lord Milford, but he subsequently recognizes her true character and consequently alters the will he has just made in her favour. Hence, Francis is forced to shoot Milford and spend the rest of the play hunting down his daughter, to murder her too before she inherits her father's money. In Between Two Women, a raisonneur figure is employed, in the shape of clergyman, Philip Carton, to point out the evil nature of Carmen to the gullible Harry, so that he turns instead to the goodness of Violet, thereby triggering a revenge motive on the part of Carmen, which becomes a driving force behind the action of the play. Likewise, in The Girl Who Wrecked His Home, Val ultimately fails in tempting the affluent widower Stevenson, so that she is forced to resort to robbing him, out of which crime, murder and confusion arise.

Occasionally the villainess adopts a repentant attitude to the havoc she has wreaked on people's lives, but this is never expressed with any degree of realism or psychological depth. In The Worst Woman in London Francis very briefly shows regret in the third act, but knows she has gone too far and 'must live out this life of sin'. An incredibly unconvincing reversal of character takes place in Carmen's abandonment of her revenge scheme in Between Two Women and it was not a reversal which pleased Beerbohm's theatre companion, who expressed a preference for Walter Melville's clear delineation of black and white characters, as opposed to his brother's tendency to sometimes blend the two :

in straightforward virility of conception and execution Frederick fell far below his brother's level. Walter never hesitated, never, hedged. His heroes and heroines were heroes and heroines without a blemish; his villains male and female, were dyed black all over and to the very core. Frederick, on the other hand, was always sneaking away to hold the mirror up to what he took for Nature. 'I have no patience', said my guide, 'with Frederick. I believe he has it in him to do really fine work. But - there! What did I tell you ? And there, to be sure, was Carmen de Siveraux bewailing the long loss of a little blind son whom she had once loved with all the finest passion of maternity. 'So much', said my guide, 'for Carmen de Siveraux - neither one thing nor the other! Oh for one hour of Walter!' (p.524)

This actually created problems for the actress, Miss Constance Elgin, who had to be convincingly evil and then convincingly repentant, and was in danger of being overshadowed in her role as villainess, by the 'good' Violet played by Miss

Lydia Busch :

Miss Lydia Busch should obtain first mention for her rendition of Violet Thornton. In joy and tribulation she was equally impressive, and her little touches of coquetry in the earlier portion of the play made more manifest the power of suggestion which she gave to her expression of pathos in the latter. Miss Constance Elgin had to deal more heavily with the part of Carmen de Saverceaux, and her acting of the woman whose callousness breaks down under the influence of a mother's instinct was remarkably real. 12

Beerbohm's companion was somewhat overstating his case, with regard to Walter Melville's black and white characters, for despite the formulaic construction of the plot and roles, certain ambiguities exist within the female roles, composed by both brothers. In A Disgrace to Her Sex (1904), Walter had made the villainess of the piece, a certain Hilda Valley, a bigamist twice over and a fortune hunter. In addition to suddenly meeting up with her two 'husbands', she also meets the man who seduced and abandoned her at eighteen, leaving her to give birth to a daughter, Mabel. In the third act, she therefore switches to the role of fallen woman and becomes an object of censorship, not for her avaricious nature, but for her 'impurity'. Learning that she is a 'child of shame', Mabel turns on her mother, declaring, 'I hate you, my mother, I despise you, my mother, I curse you my mother, you a woman, a woman, a disgrace to her sex' (III. p.54). When David Carrington, Hilda's prospective suitor, is identified as Mabel's father at the end of the third act and the limits of moral indignation and outrage are reached, the fourth act surprisingly hands out happiness all round. Carrington suffering from a guilt complex, wants to make amends, and the play concludes, not only with the prospect of a union between the hero and heroine types, but also with the implication of a future union between Hilda and Carrington, despite all her misdemeanours.

Miss Olga Audré, as Hilda, therefore had a more complex character than her usual 'black and white' villainess to play, and needed, on this occasion, to incite tears as well as boos :

Miss Olga Audré has been happily retained for the part of the adventuress. She has won distinction in this class of character and though the impersonation lacked

the heinous attributes which are usually associated with it, there was present that cheery optimism that gave zest to every action, while her suave accents sounded so clearly as to allow no word to go unheard. Miss Audré excels in the part of villainess, but she gave proof that in the portrayal of emotion she is equally skillful - a fact that became amply evident in the confession of her shame to her daughter, a scene which was made very thrilling. 13

The fallen woman in Walter's The Girl Who Wrecked His Home is less fortunate. Though initially belonging to the 'good' category, Bertha Marshall is tempted into wrecking hearth and home. She gives in to the advances of the evil Leonard Kenyon. A partial explanation is offered, in so far as her husband, Jack, has been ignoring her, due to the pressure of work. She regrets her folly, and is eventually abandoned by Leonard when he discovers she has no money, and therefore becomes an outcast from both hero and villain groups. Consequently, she is absent from much of the complicated stage action of the second and third acts, being discovered at the end of the third act, a forlorn and abandoned creature in a snow storm. Her regret is indisputable as she cries, 'Oh what fools women are, when Heaven blesses them with the love of a good true man, why don't they respect that love, I have suffered for years, hardships and privations (IV. p.87). Her daughter forgives her but her husband cannot, leaving her a house in the country in which to live alone. 14

In this production, the role of outcast was played by 'another established favourite', Miss Marian Denvil. Praising the 'subtle power' of her acting, the Era recalls two of the most memorable moments of her performance. including her scene of repentance :

A most effective scene was that in which she turns upon a youthful lover who insults her and lays him low with the effect of a pistol shot, but a still greater impression was created when, haggard, worn and weary, she falters into the drawing room and realizes that she stands in the presence of her wronged husband. 15

A little more explanation into the reasons behind a woman's 'fall' is offered in Frederick's The Bad Girl of the Family (1909). The 'bad girl' is supposedly Bess Moore, though the title would be more appropriate for her wicked and evil minded sister, the ironically named, 'Honour'. Bess has been seduced by the rich

Harry Gordon, the perfect villain of the piece, whom everyone wanted to see come to an untimely end. 'I felt, in common with every other member of the audience', wrote the reviewer for the Playgoer and Society Illustrated, 'a healthy desire to climb up to the stage, take Harry Gordon by the coat collar and shake his eyes out of him'. 16

Now she is no longer a 'pure' woman, she wants Harry to marry her, but he refuses. Instead his father, the moneylender Barney Gordon, offers to be her protecteur. Horrified at such a prospect, Bess shoots him and only escapes arrest by the timely intervention of good friends. At no point is she a thoroughly 'bad girl'. She is seen in the first act to be supporting her family by borrowing money from Barney Gordon at a high rate of interest and she apparently allowed herself to be seduced, given the promise of marriage and the threat of poverty :

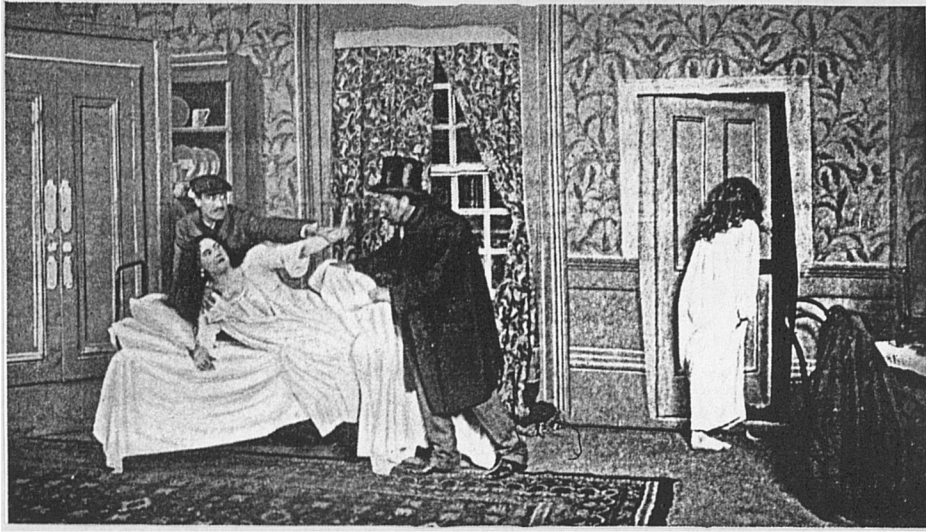
what inducement is there for girls who earn their own living to be good? I am a shop girl, the first day I went there the manager took a fancy to me, smiled at me, I took no notice, then he began to make complaints against me. The food was so bad and insufficient, that I was glad to get a meal outside, but I couldn't afford to go on paying for that. Then I was invited out to dinner, and glad I was of it, because I was hungry - hunger was the start of my downfall, those outings continued until I gave way to his entreaties then he got tired of me. 17

Bess, in fact, has her revenge, by taking the place of Harry's unwilling bride and becoming his lawful wife, without his knowing and much to his horror when the deception is uncovered.

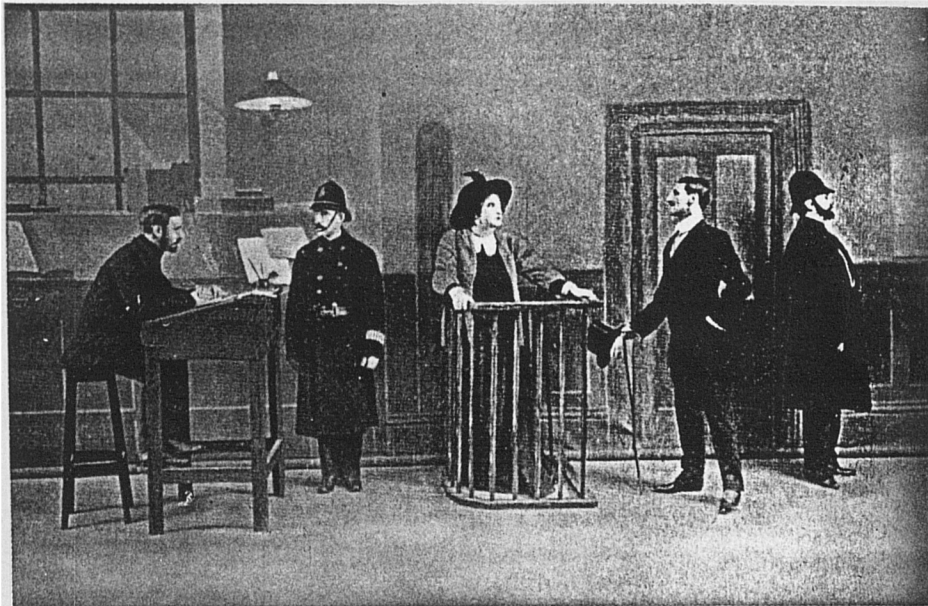
The play's success largely depended upon the actress playing Bess and on this occasion,

The title-rôle could scarcely have found a more suitable exponent than Miss Violet Englefield. Of commanding physique and prepossessing appearance, Miss Englefield was natural and vivacious throughout, and with a strong and expressive voice gave every effect, both dramatic and humorous, to many piquant lines, which were received with enthusiasm. 18

A burlesque artist from Wyndham's and the Apollo Theatre, she drew in the crowds at the Elephant and Castle, and a couple of months later was playing the role, twice daily, to packed houses at the Aldwych, who went home 'absolutely head



Scenes from The Bad Girl of the Family (1909)



over heels in love with the Bad Girl'.¹⁹ There were also striking scenes and lines, which contributed to the success, for example the lines, 'Men don't expect any women to be virtuous except their wives and sisters', which apparently brought the house down, and the dormitory scene in which the boarding shop girls defend themselves with pillows and bedding, in the style of the suffragettes, against policemen.

The working girl is a recurring type in Melvillian melodrama and it is frequently the world of the overworked and underpaid shop girl that is chosen as a setting for the working class accomplices of the hero/heroine group. If the rich aristocratic heroine is abducted or wrongfully cast out from her home, she is always helped by loyal, working class, servant friends. In Between Two Women, for instance, Violet is sheltered by Polly and Pringle in a shop, where they secure her employment, until she loses her position, because she refuses to give in to the advances of the villain James Durwood, who therefore arranges with the shop manager for her to be sacked. The heroine type is always far less interesting than the dangerous woman, given that her role is that of passive victim, who after all the trials and tribulations of the four acts will ultimately be rewarded with the prospect of living happily ever after, with her knight in shining armour.

With an assortment of dangerous women as the centre of attraction, the Melvilles had hit upon a melodrama formula which was popular and successful. 'Mr Melville stretches points to get good curtains, and even situations', wrote the Era's reviewer, describing Frederick's The Bad Girl of the Family, 'but he knows his audiences, and his fare satisfies them from start to finish. It does more - it gluts them'.²⁰ Hissing the villains and watching the administration of poetic justice were the particular delights of the gallery boys and girls, even if it had less appeal for the more fashionable and condescending patrons of the stalls. As Disher comments on the revival of The Worst Woman in London, at the Adelphi in 1903, 'much to the annoyance of pit and gallery, the stalls sauntered in late-parties of them, finely dressed, intent on mockery - just to see old Milford's last moments when he burnt the will in Francis's favour before going to sleep' (p.171). An attitude of condescension and patronage also pervades Beerbohm's commentary,

and yet inspite of the intellectual's rejection of this form of popular theatre, it had a huge following; a regular audience that could afford the 'popular prices' and that came enthusiastically to witness the excitement and crime, the thrills and spills of their favourite actors, or more importantly, actresses.

If the Parisian stage had had a monopoly of diabolical women, in the form of increasingly lustful and materialistic courtisane, fortune hunters, during the second half of the nineteenth century, it is the turn of the London stage at the beginning of the new century to offer its own type of dangerous woman in a form of popular theatre. It ignored the on-going debate over the case of the fallen woman in the theatre of ideas, or the Baudelairean woman of the intellectual Decadent. Its image of the dangerous woman catered for delight and excitement, in the crime and trickery crammed into an evening's performance, but with the reassuring knowledge of the ultimate administration of poetic justice.

Notes to Chapter 3 : Melodrama's Dangerous Women

1. The plays are listed at the end of the bibliography, as manuscript material, with the licence dates as registered in the Lord Chamberlain's Collection.
2. On the revival of The Girl Who Took the Wrong Turning, at the Aldwych in 1910, the reviewer for the Playgoer and Society Illustrated, new series, 3, No. 17 (1911), commented on the help the audience got from the programme :

The four acts were divided into thirteen scenes - less than a penny a scene for the pit - fully described on the programme, the latter dotted here and there with extracts from the classics, and a running commentary on the play. (p.168)
3. Ibid.
4. Melodrama (1954), p.165. Hereafter referenced in the text.
5. Era, 28 October 1899, p.11.
6. Act III, p.58. of the manuscript. Page references from the manuscripts are given where possible, for sometimes odd pages are unnumbered, or have changed numerical sequence.
7. More Theatres (1969), p.523.
8. 2 November 1902, p.10.
9. 1 November 1902, p.13.
10. Era, 19 November 1904, p.15.
11. Era, 6 October 1906, p.15.

12. Era, 1 November 1902, p.13.
13. Era, 28 May 1904, p.13.
14. There is a possible note of redemption in the husband's last speech of the play but as the final lines of typescript appear to be missing, it is impossible to be certain.
15. 5 October 1907, p.14.
16. Playgoer and Society Illustrated, new series, 1, no. 4 (1910), p.136.
17. Act III, p.6. : a new sequence of page numbers begins half way through the script.
18. Era, 9 October 1909, p.17.
19. Era, 1 January 1910, p.19.
20. Ibid.

Section Two : The 'Third Sex'

Chapter 5 : The Male Impersonator of Music Hall : Vesta Tilley

The first section illustrated how the image of the sexually dominant woman posed an uncomfortable threat to her vulnerable, male victim and underlined the ideological conspiracy of passive, virtuous femininity. Female sexuality is bartered for a return of wealth and luxury, gained parasitically at the expense of bourgeois commercialism and puritan ethics. It had therefore to be punished by the counter mythology of the 'fallen angel'; a paradoxical admission of the challenge the image posed. As a strategy for power, it carries a heavy price tag, as a woman trades her body for wealth, and in terms of this study, is the crudest and least desirable means of taking male power, as stated at the outset.

This second section turns to a more complex challenge to the 'doll's house', as it considers the combinations of female sexuality with male guises and attempts to show how emulation of male behaviour, dress or speech, might serve to undermine male authority or disturb the stereotypical image of female beauty. The first study is the phenomenon of the late nineteenth-century male impersonator of English music hall, the most famous and successful being Vesta Tilley, to whom special reference is made.

The growth of the English music hall industry begins in the mid-nineteenth century. Most music hall historians trace its beginnings back to the male domain of the 'song and supper' institutions of the 1840's. The early manifestations of the combination of food and entertainment were transformed into halls of music on the introduction of an entrance fee; an innovation largely attributed to Charles Morton, 'father of the music hall', whose Canterbury Arms, which Morton took over in 1848, has been generally recognized as the first music hall. With the emphasis on the entrance fee and entertainment as opposed to the consumption of alcoholic beverages, the early halls were no longer exclusive to male company

or performers.¹

As adjuncts to public houses, the early enterprises consisted of an eating space for the clientèle, with a platform at one end, presided over by a vociferous chairman. By the 1860's the popularity of the entertainment was assured and the 1880's witnessed an architectural boom in the building of halls. Many of the buildings which housed music hall in the 1880's were originally designed for 'artistic and scientific edification',² but having proved financial disasters, were bought by music hall entrepreneurs and as performance venues, therefore merged connotations of high art and popular culture. There were still small music halls which flourished in the less affluent, East London areas in the 1870's and were architecturally poor, unsafe and insanitary,³ but the 'cleaning-up' process accelerated, to reach the giddy heights of the Alhambra, Tivoli and the Palace.

Its rapid growth as a form of Victorian entertainment and its expansion from the early, largely working class audiences, to an incorporation of the respectable, wealthy, middle classes, is due mainly to recognition of the music hall as an opportunity for big business. Peter Bailey's modern analysis of music hall,⁴ argues persuasively that music hall's expansion and increasing respectability was due to its commercialism and gradual assimilation into the 'cultural apparatus of a capitalist society', rather than any 'high-minded' social reformist policies.⁵

The argument is strengthened by taking into account the theatrical history of the eighteenth century, characterized by the struggle to lift the ban on legitimate theatre outside of the Royal Patents.⁶ As entrepreneurs recognized theatre as a viable, commercial enterprise, so the struggle to break the monopoly ensued. An entertainment form, when seen as a potential business venture, is likely to undergo rapid expansion, as in the case of the halls. Music hall and variety entertainment were also much indebted to the previous century's struggle, which, though detrimental to the legitimate drama, spawned a lively and hybrid tradition of alternative, popular entertainment; a rich inheritance for its nineteenth-century descendants.⁷ Furthermore, when the Licensing Act of 1843 lifted the Patent monopoly, many of the new theatres, created as a result of the legal amendment, were established in the precursor hall venues, creating a need for new performance

spaces, for the 'song and supper' traditions. ⁸

There was always conflict between the music hall profession and legitimate theatre, a rivalry which manifested itself chiefly in the legal harangues over the sketch play which theatre tried to ban from the halls throughout the second half of the century. It was only tolerated, at length, when some of the great actors and actresses in theatre were persuaded to appear in sketches in the music hall. The Coliseum for instance, under the management of Oswald Stoll (like Morton, a major manager of the halls), in the early twentieth century, managed to engage stars such as Bernhardt and Réjane, to perform selections from their most popular roles; again, indicative both of a connotative blend of 'high' and 'low' culture and the big business 'star' syndrome. A performance space had evolved in which it was possible to watch Bernhardt play Phèdre and hear Marie Lloyd singing 'My Old Man'. ⁹

Performance in music hall was structured by a series of individual, unrelated acts, freeing the performer from restrictions of dramatic plot structure and assuring the solo artist spatial dominance and centrality in performance. Star images were constructed by publicity campaigns and re-organization of proxemics between audience and performer, significantly affected by the turns system. ¹⁰ As Peter Bailey states :

The distancing of the performer from the audience, one of the essential conditions of star appeal, began with the introduction of the formal stage at the Canterbury. The turns system further removed the performer from his original place among the audience for, with the need to keep to a strict schedule, there was no time to spend hob-nobbing with the groundlings by the singer's table. ¹¹

For the stars at the top there were the rewards of high salaries (higher than in theatre), but those at the bottom of the hierarchy, as in any capitalist venture, were poorly paid. Some music hall historians have taken the optimistic view of job expansion and have suggested that the halls presented women with a further opportunity for an independent, economic lifestyle :

It is pleasant to think of the girls getting a chance at last, because until the Halls threw open their welcoming doors, the outlets in the legitimate theatre must

have been limited (especially for uneducated women) and, apart from marriage, there wasn't much to choose from except being a servant, working in a factory, signing on with Florence Nightingale or becoming a nun (or of course a harlot).¹²

Colin McInnes's flippant view, tends towards an idealistic opinion of women 'getting a chance'. In reality, the lower échelons of the hall were flooded with poverty stricken women seeking employment¹³ and several were likely to end up in the more lucrative career as a 'lady of the promenade', like Clarkson Rose's 'Audrey', whom he so candidly described in Red Plush and Greasepaint.¹⁴ Successful careers often meant that the female performer might become the breadwinner for her family,¹⁵ as so frequently happened to successful actresses,¹⁶ and be subject to a highly taxing schedule, in order to take care of a large number of dependents.

A.B. Walkley, ranked among those stage critics less prejudicially disposed towards music hall, attempted a simple classification of artists into three groups; 'idealists, realists and fantasts',¹⁷ and suggested that the idealist group was the one to which most female performers belonged - chiefly the serio comic ladies. Amongst these optimists, he also included women performing as men, owing to their idealization of the 'modern Johnny'. Male impersonators have their own history which dates much further back than the music hall era, though unlike the tradition of the female impersonator it has attracted little interest.¹⁸

The tradition of the breeches role, as it was previously called, began as soon as the Drury Lane patent welcomed women into the theatre in the 1660's. The tradition of men playing all roles, male and female, had gradually caused unease, as some actors chose to carry on their female roles outside the confines of the theatre.¹⁹ Once this theatrical convention was broken and it became customary for women to appear on stage, they immediately reversed tradition by taking on comic male roles, the best exponent of these being Nell Gwyn. Richard Findlater quotes statistics indicative of the popularity of the breeches roles. stating that 'of 375 plays first produced between 1660 and 1700, eighty-nine contained at least one breeches part; in fourteen more, women played male leads; in at least three, they played all the roles; and they were often given breeches in revivals'.²⁰

Primarily, such roles existed as part of a plot mechanism, the action of the play

demanding that the heroine assume a male guise. This applied to Sir William Killigrew's The Siege of Urbin, in which the heroine, Celestina, dresses herself in a 'man's periwig, coat, breeches, and sword', to escape a forced marriage.²¹ Likewise, Beaumont and Fletcher's revived melodrama, Philaster requires that the love sick heroine Bellario pursue her hero disguised as a page boy.²²

As the stage breeches roles became popular, they set a trend in society fashions. After Nell Gwyn's performance as Florimel in Dryden's 'Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen', 'her triumph so "took the town" that soon afterwards many ladies masqueraded in men's clothes at the Court itself'.²³ Such fashions served to reinforce femininity rather than be 'unwomanly' and on stage, the wearing of breeches provided ample opportunity for a titillating demonstration, equivalent to the nineteenth-century can-can, as Nell and her rival, Moll Davis, increased their repertoires by dancing gigs as afterpieces to the main performance.²⁴

The following century saw the success of the 'Lovely Peggy' Woffington, who took several breeches parts, including 'The Female Officer', 'The Recruiting Officer', and most successful of all, Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's The Constant Couple. A shapely leg and the heightening of female beauty by the severity of masculine attire, established Peggy as a popular eighteenth century entertainer, whose fame was recreated in the nineteenth century, in a play based on her celebrity.²⁵

In the early nineteenth century, the tradition flourished in entertainment forms such as comic opera, burlesque, or extravaganza. Amongst some of these early nineteenth-century impersonators were Betty Bonehill, or, perhaps the most popular, Madame Vestris. She achieved her first success in the burlesque 'Giovanni in London', was popularly nick-named 'Adonis' and henceforth prohibited by demanding and adoring audiences, from changing to more serious roles.

Unlike her eighteenth and early nineteenth-century predecessors, the late nineteenth-century male impersonator did not use masculine attire to heighten femininity. Whereas Peggy Woffington or Madame Vestris exploited male costume to reveal an expanse of shapely thigh; to underline their sexuality, Vesta Tilley and her Victorian / Edwardian contemporaries, the most famous of these after Tilley herself, being Ella Shields and Hetty King, suppressed their femininity in

order to perfect the illusion of being male. If successful, male disguises could prove a significant subversion of gender power roles and identities.

To understand how gender play arises, is to understand how western society has coded the biological differentiation between the sexes, as gender difference. It is precisely because western society insists on what Foucault terms the 'true sex',²⁶ that the possibility of gender play is feasible. Established medically and legally, a person's private sex is publicly masked in the appropriate male and female dress codes, designating gender identity and coding social behaviour. To upset the boundaries of masculine and feminine constructs by means of transsexual dress codes, is to challenge the 'fixed' identities of male and female. In the 'real' world, 'reading' the masks of the dress codes as the 'true sex' upsets the 'order of things', as in the case of Balzac's 'La Zambinella' or Foucault's Herculine Barbin(e).²⁷ Yet if the immediate threat to the 'order' is removed by an artificial framework, such as theatre, then temporary abolition of the 'true sex' is granted. Only the voyeuristic pleasure of sexual ambiguity remains, and one sex, seen as two, is permitted to pass unpunished.

Vesta Tilley drew very definite boundaries between her performance and own life style; in the one she opened up the play on sexual ambiguity, in the other, she was always, unequivocally and irrevocably, a 'lady'.

Born into a music hall environment^{and} playing her first London engagement at the age of 10^{vesta Tilley with}, her slight, androgynous, Peter Pan physique, asexual to the extent that 'audiences could not tell whether she was a boy or girl',²⁸ exuded a youthful spirit which 'grew' with her. The presence of youth, in its dual connotations of age and boyhood, was the key to the success and pleasure of her act :

a dapper young man in an exquisite purple holiday costume strolls from the wings leaning on his bending cane. He comes to the centre of the footlights, and poses with crossed legs and staring monocle, the features deliciously quizzical and inane. A perfect picture...the picture speaks and the illusion is piquantly broken, or, rather, the optical illusion continues only there is another person present - the woman artist who unfolds the tale. 29

The gender semiotics in the performance context are pleasurably mixed and complex.

The voice code and audience foreknowledge signify the 'true sex'. Signs of

masculinity are based on dress, body movement and gesture. But there are also the facial and physical codes signifying androgyny. The interplay of male and female codes is located in a 'neutered' body and whether masculine or feminine codes are foregrounded, will depend largely on their reception by the spectator.

Yet, off-stage, Tilley kept to her 'true sex' and even chose female dress for some of her publicity posters or illustrated song sheets.³⁰ Her chief weakness with regard to the impersonations, was never to have her hair cropped, but to conceal its feminine lustre and length under a cleverly designed wig.³¹ She did not carry on her performance of the 'high life' Johnnies she impersonated on stage, in her private life, as some of her male, precursor 'mashers' did.³²

In this respect, she differs from the American impersonators of the 1870's, most notably, Annie Hindle. Laurence Senelick's article on the American tradition,³³ gives a clear picture of Hindle's disguise of her 'true sex', not only on the stage, but in her private life, where she furthered gender ambiguity by 'marrying' one of her dressers. Unlike Tilley's androgynous physique, Hindle, as she matured, was endowed with overtly masculine characteristics, including a moustache and stubble beard, so that the stage act became a means of 'neutralizing' the threat posed to images of femininity by the 'butchness' of Hindle and her imitators. In this instance, art concealed reality.³⁴

All of Tilley's impersonations were based on imitating, 'that side of masculinity which is clothes conscious. All the young men she has pretended to be are proud of what they wear - all of them, from the one in 'Etons' to the one in Khaki'.³⁵ Essentially, Willson Disher's listing of her soldiers, sailors, messenger-boy, 'as well as a curate or two', can be subdivided into two types of 'clothes conscious' dressing; the dandy and the uniformed male.

Annette Kuhn in her recent essay, 'Sexual Disguise and Cinema',³⁶ establishes a comparative affinity between cross-dressing and dandyism :

although the two practices differ in their articulation of sexual difference - both foreground the performance aspect of dress, and in so doing activate a certain irony...If clothing as performance threatened to undercut the subject fixed in ideology, crossdressing as a particular expression of it goes one step further. It highlights the centrality of gender constructs in processes of subjectivity and comments upon

a culturally salient means by which a would-be fixed gender identity is marked and constructed...Crossdressing, then, may denaturalise that phenomenon held in our culture to be most evidently and pre-eminently natural : sexual difference.³⁷

Tilley's 'masher' impersonations involve both these modes of 'self-referentiality'.

As a female she assumes the identity of a male, already encoded in a costume which has established a deliberate distance from the 'gendered body'. The dandy, 'a man who, by virtue of his own sense of superior taste, stands outside and slightly above the rest of his society',³⁸ comes under the critical and satirical scrutiny of the male impersonator.

The notion of dress-as-performance shared by the dandy and the art of cross-dressing, are pertinent to the Victorian and Edwardian music hall impersonator, because of the fashionable dandy cult, popularized by Oscar Wilde. In 1878, when Tilley was making her London début, Wilde was also abandoning Oxford to make his début on London's society stage. Wilde used dress as a 'theatrical costume',³⁹ as a self-advertisement for his entry into society and as fin de siècle dandyism became fashionable, promoted in the high society circles of the Prince of Wales, it became a satirical target in papers such as Punch. As long as the dandy figure remained in fashion, the success of its satirical double was assured. When the Wilde trials of 1895 began to reverse public attitudes, the demise of the parasitic, idle dandy, rapidly completed by the no nonsense climate of World War One, was set in motion. As England went into war, Tilley no longer concentrated on aping London's swells, but was cutting a dashing, patriotic figure in military cloth.

Whereas the dandy is characterised as one who does not work for a living, uniform as a dress code, primarily identifies people by occupation; by what they do. Although some of Tilley's uniformed males were civilians, the majority were military types, signifying male values of heroism, strength, authority and power. In military uniform she was admitted to the 'master' race and engaged in the power values denied her 'true-slave-sex'. The reverse is true for example, of the male actors in Genet's mid-twentieth century play, The Maids, who wear the uniform, which, just as the military uniform signifies male power, is a metaphor for female

powerlessness and subservience. The sinister and fatal double role playing of master-slave fantasies engages the male performer in the antithetical experience of negativity, or reversal of power.⁴⁰

Uniform may also be used to signify an androgynous, asexual coding, foregrounding codes of 'sameness', the group or collective, and thereby undermine the assumption of sexual difference, by an absence of gender identity. In this way, Tilley's uniformed, androgynous figure, was not dominated by an overtly overpowering, military, 'macho' image, but combined militarism with the asexual uniform of youth.

To reach an understanding of how or to what extent it was possible for Tilley to share, seize or subvert male power values, requires further reconstruction of her music hall act, by examining the song material.

Songwriting in music hall had also become big business. Singers copyrighted songs from the composers in order to lay financial claims to their 'smash hits' and identifying songs with singers, was a signature tune for stardom. Some of Tilley's early material was written by her father; some was provided by her husband, in addition to compositions by top professional song writers of the industry. Her early work, as Willson Disher points out, did not 'bear the imprint of her personality', and could have been sung by 'any red-nosed comic or serio comic,'⁴¹ though that was to change as her act, material and star quality became established. The songs, or at least those best remembered, split broadly into three kinds; the 'girl' songs, the 'swell' songs and the 'military' numbers.

In the songs, Tilley consistently aligns herself with the male voice. She addresses the female spectator in the 'you' form (thereby excluding herself from implication) and aligns herself when using the 'we' form with the male populace. She does not use her male guise to engage in double play on her sexual identity, which would detract from the masculine mask.⁴²

In the 'girl' songs, as she addresses the female spectator, comments were made about a woman's love of money, her flirtatious nature or fickleness in love. 'Angels without Wings' implies that women hide behind pious façades; 'Like the men, you're angels, when you're not found out', is the punch line of the chorus.

As is stated in the accompanying explanation to the song in Sixty Years of British Music Hall :

This song depicts women as angels despite all their blemishes and the chorus floats as angelically as the women in the song would have their admirers believe them to behave. The distinction, between what the women really are and what they would wish to appear, is cleverly counterpoised by the verse being in martial 2/4 time and the chorus in blithe waltz rhythm. The impish irony of the lilting chorus comes with the last line 'Like the men, you're angels, when you're not found out'.⁴³

'Wicked young girls' are chastised for being flirtatious and fickle in the chorus of 'Oh! You Girls', and in 'Sweetheart May' the fickle whims of women are contrasted with the constancy of the male partner. The cost of marriage is the theme of 'For the Sake of the Dear Little Girls'; a sad lament on woman as the ruin, perhaps more specifically, the financial ruin, of men.

The addresses to women are aimed at a specific group, namely the young, single and working class bracket. Marital status and age are indicated in the multiple references to the cost of courting a young girl. Class is indicated by the references to the work sphere; the girl waiting in the cook shop ('By the Sad Sea Waves'), and the 'slaveys' ('The Bold Militiaman'), or the barmaid ('In the Pale Moonlight'). When proper names are used, we are no longer in the world of the Graces or Lady Janets, but the plain old Mary Anns or Aunt Matildas.

The moral finger is occasionally pointed at young girls, warning that frivolity and fickleness will lead eventually to the punishment of a solitary life as an old maid ('Oh! You Girls'). Or, a much worked theme in social drama is given a brief airing, as in 'Daughters', which touches upon the difficulties families have in successfully marrying their female issue.

Colin MacInnes, in his study of music hall songs, notes the importance of references to money, which are frequently found interspersed in love lyrics,⁴⁴ and it is this underlying materialistic greed for money which provides a clue to understanding Tilley's satire. Some critics condemn her attitude towards women in the 'girl' songs as antipathetic to the female sex. Yet, this is to misunderstand that the target of Tilley's satire is not women, but the 'Vanity Fair' of both sexes;

to mock the world's madness in its greed for wealth. It is precisely because of her image that she is able to foreground the follies of both sexes. Being an amalgamation of male and female, yet androgynously distanced from both, she is able to comment on human behaviour as an outsider with an insider's knowledge. If a male performer were to use the same material in an act, then women could very possibly be subject to a sharp tone of censure, because his voice would unite with ^{the} aguilied and injured sex, whereas Tilley is protected by her neutered, neutral self, and ^{it} even places her in a position to enjoy, with the female spectator, the notion of women getting the better of male stupidity.

Like many of the popular music hall songs, Tilley's 'swell' numbers are heavily entrenched in London life. There are many references to the fashionable quarters of London; from the 'Strand' ('Midnight Son'), often cited as 'the most glamorous street in London', ⁴⁵ to the seaside girls who take a reminder of the great city on holiday with them with their 'Golden hair from Regent Street'. ⁴⁶ The latter may be a tongue-in-cheek reference to prostitution, given that Regent Street, in spite of mid-century attempts to drive away the 'ladies of the street', remained a major thoroughfare for prostitution. ⁴⁷ So too was the Burlington Arcade linking Piccadilly and New Bond Street, and it is no surprise to find two of Tilley's most famous swells 'Burlington Bertie' and 'Algy or the Piccadilly Johnny with the little Glass Eye', connoting the fin de siècle decadence of fashionable London. Both songs were written and composed by Harry B. Norris. The jollity of Algy's type is reflected in the 2/4 time and crescendoed choruses; Burlington Bertie's gullibility emphasized by a slowing down of the waltz tune at passages which tell of the girl who, 'sees a new bonnet she likes oh! so much, / Her simple remark is, "Now who can I touch?"' Again she makes fun of the male type she impersonates by showing how women will play on the 'high-life' principal by taking the 'swell's' money and laughing privately at his stupidity. Their lack of money sense comes partly from the fashionable pose of the empty-headed 'swell' and also from the way in which they have not earned their money but inherited it from their paters. ⁴⁸

The father figure is parodied by Tilley in one of her most popular songs, 'Following in Father's Footsteps', sung to a tune composed in the tempo of a polka



'Algy, the Piccadilly Johnny with the little glass eye'

(the dance tempo that had been at the height of fashion in the mid-century dance/whoring halls), ⁴⁹ which Tilley performed as a 'slim little figure in a straw hat with cane, exuding mischief'. ⁵⁰ In trying to arrive at a 'reading' of her performance Peter Davison cannot decide between 'an affectation of innocence' and thorough-going roguery', suggesting, somewhat unhelpfully, that it falls unsatisfactorily between the two. ⁵¹ As reviewers have indicated that Tilley had carefully prepared facial and kinetic, gestural innuendo ⁵² - clearly a comedian who worked out her laughs rather than ad-libbed them - it is highly probable that gestural innuendo accompanied the directives in lines such as,

How many 'lemonades' we had my word!
I really couldn't tell
At two a.m. pa started off for home, like this
and so did I!

Lyric innuendo and mischievous tune, tend towards Davison's 'thorough going roguery'; indeed, it is hard to conceive how it could possibly be played with 'genuine innocence'. Yet, because Davison 'sees' only the woman playing a man, he fails to take account of a third and highly subversive possibility; androgyny used as a satirical weapon. The image of the child-youth, as non-gender defined, is used to mock the Patriarch. The child satirically apes the gender-defined, father-to-be-like figure and rejects paternal authority.

As Tilley's technique of 'telling the story against the masquerade she mimicked', developed, so too, Willson Disher claims, did her critical acumen, which she brought to bear upon the types she studied :

Henceforth, instead of merging her own personality into that of the character she acted, she brought her wits to bear upon him critically. By pretending to be young men for so long, she had come to understand them as well as they did themselves. Now she went further and understood them better than they did themselves. That is why we saw them, not as we could see them in real life but as they were viewed through a clever woman's eyes.

'By the Sad Sea Waves' illustrated this process. She picked on the poor little London 'chappie', earning fifteen shillings a week and spending every penny he could spare on haberdashery for a week at Brighton, where he hoped to pass muster on the promenade as a real masquerade. Again the story goes against the hero of the song. Back at business, he found that the beauty he met at Brighton was the girl in the cook-shop. No doubt the song-writer had a little mockery in mind. In performance, however, this was magically translated. What we felt

when Vesta Tilley showed him to us was not derision but pathos. She felt for him and with him, and her tenderness over that little scrap of humanity was evident in all the portraits she painted from that time onwards. 53

The progression from 'derision' to 'pathos' demonstrated in her movement away from the impersonation of the 'swells' is symptomatic both of her increasing skills and a need to find new comic targets, given the declining popularity of the 'toffs'. As England moved towards the first world war, she found a new source for her impersonations - though significantly not a derisively comical one - in soldiers and sailors of the forces.

Tilley centred her military impersonations on the militiaman or volunteer, though praise for the army was universal, even in the case of the foolish 'Burlington Bertie', who would nevertheless fight and die for his country. For his efforts in the name of king and country, the soldier earned the devotion of the girls back home, and songs, such as 'Jolly Good Luck to the Girl who Loves a Soldier' or 'The Bold Militiaman' implicate the love of a woman as a reward for such duty. War time lyrics also introduced the nurse figure, as in the choruse of 'A Bit of a Blighty One', as the wounded soldier sings, 'When a saucy little nursie / Tucks me up and calls me Percy / Then I'm glad I've got this bit of a Blighty One'; a clear indication of what was expected of Britain's wartime women.

It is no accident that Tilley's impersonations were centred on the volunteer, and her impersonations involved in the propaganda of selling the idea of war. The image of woman has often been used in such campaigns, as in World War One, for instance, when women waved their men good-bye in posters bearing the slogan, 'Women of Britain Say Go'. Within this tradition, the male impersonator has also played her propaganda role, often inspiring the women to inspire the men, as in Tilley's equation of duty rewarded by love. Peggy Woffington, at the time of the Jacobite rising in the 1740's, performed a special epilogue as a 'Female Volunteer', assuming a male attire, to fight for king and country to preserve the joys of sexual intercourse, which will be severely restricted if the puritanical Catholic rebels win. The verses are rife with sexual innuendo, but ^{the call to} defending life's carnal pleasures, might well have proved an effective propaganda campaign.



*An EPILOGUE intended to be spoken by Mrs Woffington, in the Habit of a Volunteer upon reading the Gazette containing an Account of the late Action at **LA ROCHE***



1745

Peggy Woffington as the 'Female Volunteer'

Vesta Tilley's contribution to World War One propaganda was by no means small, and one for which she was criticized by those 'disgusted by the futile carnage'.⁵⁴ Her song, 'The Army of To-day's Alright' helped to secure recruits before the enforcement of conscription. Furthermore, the War Office took the title for a poster asking for volunteers. She even had a platoon named after her. Though requested to perform for the troops in the trenches, she never did, pleading the difficulties of transporting her costumes and props.⁵⁵ Yet, the success of such an enterprise is doubtful, given that in wartime, monastic societies require the maternal signifiers of the homeland, or images of passive femininity, offering reassurance of the girl back home.⁵⁶

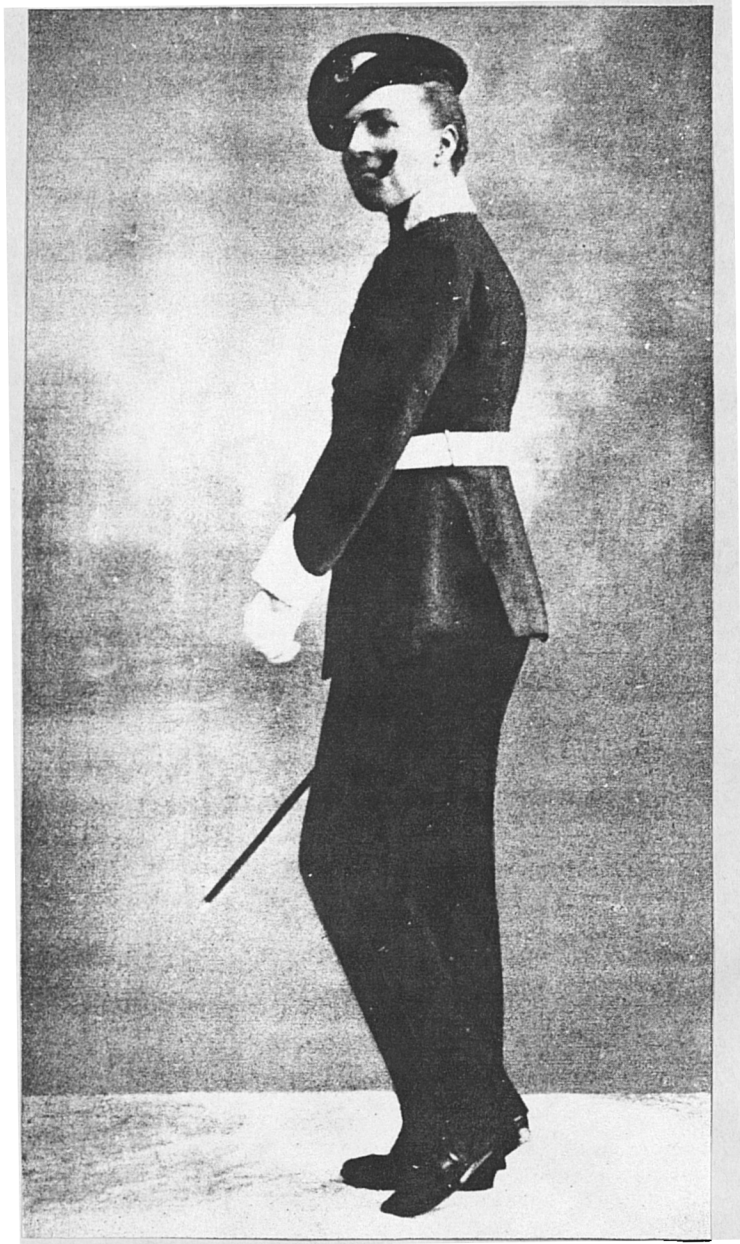
The military songs clearly delineate the change in gender roles. The volunteer in 'The Army of To-day's Alright' or the 'Military man' of 'Jolly Good Luck to the Girl who Loves a Soldier' are characterised by a change in attitudes towards women; they are not invited to laugh at men's weaknesses but to support the ideology of heroism. There is now only one ideal man for women :

Girls, are the soldiers as attractive as they were a while ago?
Don't answer no!
If there's another kind of fellow you prefer,
Well, I maintain - You want the cane!
('The Army of To-day's Alright')

'A Jolly Good Luck to the Girl who Loves a Soldier', introduces the theme of male promiscuity, suggesting that a military uniform is a licence for heroism and indiscriminate sexual behaviour; though the threat to women which might be posed if the song were performed by a man, is alleviated by the androgynous image.

In short, it is the military songs and uniform which possibly justify reviewers' criticisms of Tilley, because her act had moved away from satirical comment on social behaviour, to prescribing or instructing people on how to behave; a patriotic but retrogressive ideology of the sexes.

Uniting these several aspects of Tilley's performance, is their reception by the spectator. The transmission of performance images and their decoding by the audience, is a highly complex process, which most critics decline to comment



'Jolly Good Luck to the Girl who Loves a Soldier'

on, but is crucial to understanding her huge appeal to a vast number of fans.

It is somewhat surprising, at first glance, to learn that the majority of Tilley's fans were female. This phenomenon was not uncommon to women in breeches roles. Popular verses written about Peggy Woffington during her first season in London celebrated her in the following way :

When first in petticoats you trod the stage,
Our sex with love you fired : your own with rage.
In breeches next, so well you played the cheat -
The pretty fellow and the rake complete -
Each sex was then with different passions moved :
The men grew envious and the women loved ! 57

The verse gives a clear indication of the way in which a shapely, attractive woman in male dress may constitute an ideal image of masculinity, to be envied by men and adored by women.

Similarly, discussing the nineteenth century tradition of male impersonators, Senelick cites the number of 'mash notes' received by Annie Hindle, referring to the occasion when, 'she once compared billets-doux with Henry J. Montague, the matinée idol of Wallack's Theatre, and her admirers, all women, far outnumbered his. She was quite indifferent as to whether her correspondents addressed her as "Sir" or "Madam"'.⁵⁸ In instances cited by Vesta Tilley, female adoration could be extreme :

It may be because I generally appeared on the stage as a young man that the big percentage of my admirers were women. Girls of all ages would wait in crowds to see me enter or leave the theatre, and each post brought piles of letters, varying from an impassioned declaration of undying love to a request for an autograph, or a photograph, or a simple flower, or a piece of ribbon I had worn. To illustrate the impression I made upon at least one of my girl admirers, I have in my possession now a complete diary of a young girl, covering a period of some ten years, in which she records the first time she saw me, her journeys to see me in the various towns at which I appeared, her opinions of the many new songs I had introduced during the time, all punctuated with expressions of lasting love and devotion. 'A Diary of my most loved Artiste Miss Vesta Tilley' is the title. 59

However, there are few attempts to understand or analyse Tilley's appeal to women. MacInnes in his 'reading' of her performance of the song 'Jolly Good

Luck to the Girl who Loves a Sailor', suggests, though is too coy to openly state, the presence of lesbian desires, writing, "'Girls!' she cried, in the final line of the chorus, 'if you'd like to love a soldier, you can all love me!'" Since she was appealing to the girls, but was dressed herself as a man, there is something slightly equivocal about this number'.⁶⁰ The suggestion of MacInnes, which might be applicable to the overtly masculine appeal of a performer like Annie Hindle, fails, here, to distinguish that what the women saw was not a masculinised woman, but a sexually ambiguous image of a beautiful youth. In 1980's western society, women in masculinised dress signify feminist-lesbian subcultures. On stage in the 1890's, Tilley's image was the vision of an Adonis.

The most numerous and ardent group of female fans were the young, single factory girls in the gallery and what she offered them was an ideal 'man'. Whereas images of 'macho', muscular masculinity, invite the admiration of males and engage women in the voyeuristic gaze of physical and sexual desire, the Adonis image, for the female spectator, is a spiritual asexual coupling in which the threat of physical, sexual contact is absent. It is a narrative image which relates the mythology of Romance; the 'fairy tale' prince, who protects, loves, and is the eternalized moment of 'Happy Ever After'. For the young, female spectator, this was what Tilley's image signified; a representation of a collectively recognized, mythical ideal of male beauty.

To take a contemporary example, Tilley's image might be compared to Julie Andrews in the film, Victor Victoria (1982). Though this image has a narrative function in the story telling of the film, its visual signification is that of androgynous, sexual ambiguity. As a woman^{is} impersonating a gay man, impersonating a woman, sexual ambiguity is compounded and the androgyny of Andrews - surprisingly akin to Tilley in physique, style and dress - is highlighted by the 'macho' image of her lover, played by Burt Reynolds.

As for male critical response to Tilley's act, it comes as no surprise to find that her 'true sex' is never out of sight, and what is registered is the success of the 'illusion'. If androgyny is discussed, it is with reference to the male ego taming the female, but the androgynous appeal of asexual masculinity for women,



Above, 'The Midnight Son'; Below, Julie Andrews in Victor/Victoria



a kind of 'third sex', is never explored, given that it links, threateningly and subversively, to images of homosexuality. Imagine the reaction, if the male critic were to concede the illusion and align the image of a feminized male with the military, naval or Eton costumes; signifiers of monastic institutions threatened by homosexuality, abhorred and punished as undermining the 'macho' image. Perhaps, with the bisexual, androgynous cult-figures of popular music, David Bowie, Boy George, et al., it has become more acceptable, within the confines of the cult, for a male to foreground his 'femininity'. Yet, what makes it acceptable is the knowledge that it is a 'performance' and whatever the reports of 'deviant' off-stage lifestyles, the spectator is protected from them, by the distance established between spectator and 'star'.

So long as the boundaries are clear, aberrations of the 'true sex' are licenced. In Tilley's case, the conventions and framework of the music hall act, permitted collective spectatorship of an image of sexual ambiguity. Essential to the pleasure of the experience was the distance in the proxemic relationship between solo artist and audience. Not only the factory girls, but also the affluent middle classes, who frequented the halls in their heydays of big business and gaining respectability, could enjoy the sexual ambiguity, with the assurance of the protection afforded by the conventions and expectations of the spectator's role in theatrical communication.

No doubt, the working class male, also evident in audience composition, would take particular delight in the ridicule of effeminate, aristocratic 'swells,' and would not be averse to the idea of working class women taking advantage of their 'superior's' gullibility, and spectators, of whatever class or background, would be paying homage to the 'star' image, which for some, might have been the only image they 'saw'.

With the help of the publicity billing machine, which created the glamorous star image and covered up the harsh realities of performing in at least two halls a night, Tilley reached the top of her profession, commanding top fees, at the expense of the male types she satirized. Her success story, unfolded at a time when women were campaigning for their rights and challenging Victorian, gender-stereotyping. As David Ches-hire states, 'it cannot really be entirely coincidental that her career spanned the years of the Feminist Revolt, when women were trying

to play an active part in the political life of the country, and pursue careers in their chosen profession, just as easily as actresses had since 1660'.⁶¹ Tilley's career drew to a close when her husband entered parliament as a Conservative MP; an ironic taming for a woman whose career had independently secured her wealth and fame, but an inevitable conclusion, for one with a self-confessed love of high society circles.

Summarized by Senelick as the 'most highly-charged and disturbing of theatrical devices',⁶² the phenomenon of the late nineteenth century male impersonator, though short lived, was one which was endowed with a potential power of satirical subversion. No longer a device for underlining femininity, it aimed at satirically imitating male types, suppressing femininity and creating the illusion of 'being a man'. The sexual ambiguity of Tilley's act, was such that spectators of both sexes could foreground her male or female 'self', according to gender-based desires and expectations. On occasion, it did cause offence, as demonstrated at the Royal Command Performance in 1912, when female royalty looked the other way, though the fact that this was not a customary audience response, is indicative, perhaps, of pre-Freudian 'innocence'. David Cheshire cites, 'increased sophistication, and a wider knowledge of Freudian psychology' as factors that would have ultimately 'led to an unsympathetic analysis of her act', and reasons for her retirement in 1920.⁶³ This is a very probable hypothesis, given the 1918 furore over the supposed 'Black Book' listing 47,000 sexual perverts living in Britain, and the widespread publicity given to the term lesbian, due to the connected libel suit of the dancer/actress, Maud Allen; a term which not so many years previously, defenders of public morals had been anxious¹⁰ to deny existed.⁶⁴

Ella Shields, singing of another 'Burlington Bertie, who rose at ten thirty', and later Hetty King, carried on the impersonations of evening suited males and military chaps, right through the first half of the twentieth century, Hetty King's act being recently captured on film, in a made for television documentary by Channel Four. Neither, however, achieved the fame that Tilley did, partly of course, because Tilley's success patterned the ascendant fortunes of the music halls.

In terms of the entertainment industry, Vesta Tilley made significant inroads

for future 'feminist' comedians, who have since struggled to establish themselves as stand-up comics (traditionally male acts), or in cabaret routines. While contemporary feminist groups might investigate the subversive power of the male impersonator act by 'historical' reconstruction, working in a theatrical fringe of converted, minority middle class audiences, they could not hope to achieve the subversive potential of Tilley's act that had top billing in a form of mass, popular entertainment, that in spite of the big business syndrome, had not altogether lost touch with the culture, class and social background of its varied and enthusiastic audiences.

But Tilley's legacy is felt and kept alive in modern women's groups such as 'Fascinating Aida' or 'The Millies', or solo performers such as Victoria Wood, who perform acts and sing songs, which like Tilley's material, construct a comic medium in which to complain of gender stereotyping and in particular ridicule the male sex. Often asexual, or masculinized costumes, brightly coloured dungarees, or loose fitting suits, deflecting interest away from the female body, are used, as up-dated means of suppressing femininity.⁶⁵ Tilley's proto-feminist comedy routine and its satirical base is therefore both a significant contribution to the changing images of women in the 1890's and an important legacy for the continued challenge in the 1980's.

Note to Chapter 5 : The Music Hall Impersonator : Vesta Tilley

1. Consensus of opinion claims Mrs Caulfield, wife of a music hall chairman, as the first female comédienne or serio comic, again an innovation of Morton's.
2. Victor Glasstone, Victorian and Edwardian Theatres (London : Thames and Hudson, 1975), p.50.
3. Ibid., p.52.
4. Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), chapter 7, 'Rational Recreation and the Entertainment Industry : The Case of the Victorian Music Halls'.
5. Ibid., p.168.
6. For details see, The Struggle for a Free Stage in London, Watson Nicholson (New York : Benjamin Blom, 1966).
7. In French dramatic history the reverse is true. The Code Napoléon had looked after the interests of legitimate theatre, but alternative entertainment forms had been forbidden the use of costumes, scenery, make-up and so forth. The law was not changed until 1867, when De Lorge, proprietor of the Eldorado (café concert), successfully sought permission for a former tragédienne of the Comédie Française, Cornélie, to perform extracts from her classical repertoire with the use of costumes, and props. (See, Peter Leslie, A Hard Act to Follow

(New York, London : Paddington Press, 1978), pp.67-8.) Clearly, the hinderance to the growth of popular entertainment in France, must account, at least in part, for the comparatively late variety boom in the post first world war period; significantly later than the Victorian and Edwardian heydays of the halls, which rapidly declined after the war.

8. See M. Willson Disher, Winkles and Champagne (London : B.T. Batsford, 1938), p.9. Some reviewers of music hall consider that the vital tradition of food and entertainment, had much earlier origins than the 1840's. For instance, E.R. Pennell, 'The Pedigree of the Music Hall', Contemporary Review, 63 (April 1893), 575-583, links nineteenth-century music hall to the traditions of Medieval banqueting.
9. The boundaries of 'high' and 'low' culture are perhaps most effectively crossed by Bernhardt's professed opinion of Marie Lloyd, as the only 'woman of genius' on the English stage.
10. The turns system, introduced by Morton when he opened his second music hall, the Oxford, encouraged the managerial monopoly of stars, by engaging them for several turns a night in different venues. Bailey, pp.150-1, underlines the exploitative nature of the managerial system, offering it as further testimony to the 'big business' music hall syndrome.
11. Bailey, pp.151-2.
12. Colin MacInnes, Sweet Saturday Night (London : MacGibbon and Kee, 1967), p.137.
13. The difficulty of carving out a career in music hall is illustrated in Disher's (1938), description of Jenny Hill's inauspicious beginnings. Ultimately her's was a success story, but the description exemplifies the difficulties a performer faced in getting started :

She was the daughter of a cabbie on a Marylebone rank, who thought it would be a fine thing for his girl if she learnt the trade of a serio comic, and apprenticed her to a North Country publican. In return for the privilege of singing to farmers until two in the morning, she had to get up at 5 a.m. in order to scrub floors, polish pewter, and bottle beer until the performance began again at noon. She married an acrobat (who taught her his trade so vigorously that she felt the effects to the end of her life), and when barely out of her 'teens she was stranded with a baby. She waited day after day in the agent's offices, until one sent her with a note to the Pavilion. The manager read, "Don't trouble to see the bearer. I have merely sent her to get rid of her. She's troublesome", and decided to give her a chance. That night she "stopped the show". (pp.19-20)

14. Clarkson Rose (London : Museum Press, 1964), chapter xvi, 'Ladies of the Promenades'. Rose's description identifies the chorus girl type who turns to prostitution as a more lucrative living. The promenade and lounges of the West End halls are her territory until the first world War. Though practising their 'profession' in the halls, they would also go there together for a 'night out', 'as happy and as carefree as any branch of girls who were having an office outing' (p.115).
15. S. Theodore Felstead, Stars Who Made the Halls (London : T. Werner Laurie, 1946), writes of the women performers who marry but cannot give up their music hall careers; 'the saucy little soubrette who winks at you across the footlights is, like as not, the breadwinner of a large and hungry family. They marry, bring children into the world, but still hanker after the 'halls', the applause of the crowd' (p.102).
16. A case in point is Mrs Patrick Campbell who during her theatrical career supported a large number of dependents and in spite of large earnings was

frequently reduced to poverty and the goodwill of friends.

17. 'The Triumph of the Variety Entertainment', New Review, 7 (October 1892), 505-512,
18. There has, however, been a recent revival of interest, by some feminist performers or groups. Jacky Lansley's revue, The Impersonators (reviewed in, Spare Rib, March 1983, p.42), sets out to explore the potential of Victorian/Edwardian male guises. Even more recently, Virago publishing house has demonstrated its interest by including, in the 'Pioneers' series, a biographical study of Vesta Tilley by Sara Maitland (1986), though this is a disappointing and inadequately documented work.
19. See Rosamund Gilder, Enter the Actress (London : Harrap, 1931), chapter 7.
20. The Player Queens (London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), chapter 1, 'The New Women', p.15.
21. See J.H. Wilson, Nell Gwyn : Royal Mistress (London : Frederick Muller, 1952), chapter 3, 'His Majesty's Servants, 1664-5', p.34.
22. *Ibid.*, chapter 5, 'Summoned by the King', p.67.
23. C. Bax, Pretty Witty Nell (London : Chapman and Hall, 1932), chapter xvi, 'The Triumphant Comedienne, 1667', p.89.
24. J.H. Wilson (1952), gives a description of the 'rhinegraves' purchased by King Charles II for Nell in her command performance of Dryden's play, which confirms the revealing nature of the costume, stating, 'Rhinegraces, fashionable at the time, were loose, very full-cut breeches (like wide shorts or divided kilts), open at the bottom, and likely to fly up and show an expanse of thigh when the wearer danced' (p.56).
25. The play was the mid-century, Masks and Faces by Charles Reade and Tom Taylor, which had several accomplished interpreters of 'Peg' throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, including Mrs Bancroft, Madge Kendal, Mrs Bernard-Beere and Marie Tempest.
26. See the introduction to, Herculine Barbin (New York : Pantheon Books, 1980), p.vii.
27. 'La Zambinella' is the subject of Balzac's short story, Sarrasine; the macabre story of the castrato, opera singer, loved by a man, which Roland Barthes uses for his study, S/Z (Paris : Editions Seuil, 1970). Herculine Barbin(e) was the nineteenth-century hermaphrodite, raised as a woman in all-female societies, and later reclassified, medically and legally, as a male. Her/his memoirs are introduced by Foucault, as referenced in note 26.
28. Disher (1938), p.77.
29. W.R. Titterton, From Theatre to Music Hall, describing Vesta Tilley as 'Burlington Bertie', reprinted in David Cheshire's, Music Hall in Britain (Newton Abbot, Devon: Davis and Charles, 1974), pp.79-80.
30. One publicity postcard features Vesta Tilley and her husband, society figure and Conservative MP, Walter de Freece, boating on the Thames. The frontispiece to the song 'Angels without Tears' (1887, Hopwood and Crew), has an illustration of Tilley in female attire, though the song was sung in male costume.
31. The wearing of the wig is described as follows in Tilley's autobiography, Recollections of Vesta Tilley (London : Hutchinson, 1934) :

I told him [Mr Willie Clarkson] that the basis of the wig was his own work. He had made it for me years before to wear as Robin Hood. In its original form it had fairly long curls covering the canvas skull base, but I had cut and cut and experimented until I had almost got down to the canvas foundation, and at close quarters it looked like a skull cap covered with short hair. I had long wavy hair, one of the few things that female vanity would not allow me to sacrifice and before I fitted on the 'skull cap' I had to twist my own hair into innumerable small plaits, which I wound and pinned around my head, a delicate job; but when completed it gave to my head a more masculine shape. The cap was cut very short over the ears, and I left tufts of my own hair on each side of my face, which I then brushed over the cap; thus no joining was visible and I obtained the effect of short cropped hair. (pp.147-8)

32. An early example was Morton's lion comique George Leybourne, known as 'Champagne Charlie', who was encouraged to extend his image of the bon viveur into his own lifestyle, as a form of self-advertisement. This was disapproved of by high-minded reformers who felt that the image of irresponsible, high living was a bad influence on young spectators.
33. 'The Evolution of the Male Impersonator on the Nineteenth-Century Popular Stage', Essays in Theatre, 1, no.1 (November 1982), 30-44.
34. The sexual ambiguity of Tilley's act did however, become further complicated, when a female impersonator, Reginald de Vieulla did imitations of Tilley.
35. Disher (1938), p.76.
36. In, The Power of the Image (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).
37. Ibid., p.54.
38. 'The Dandy as Ironic Figure', Sima Godfrey, Sub-Stance, 36 (1982), 21-33, (p.24).
39. See Ellen Moers, The Dandy : Brummell to Beerbohm (London : Secker and Warburg, 1960), chapter xiii, p.298.
40. Interestingly, Louis Jouvet, the director of the original 1947 production, was against the idea of men playing the women's roles and insisted on a female cast. Only in recent times has it been more widely played by men, as Genet originally intended.
41. Disher (1938), p.78.
42. Jane W. Stedman 'From Dame to Woman', Victorian Studies, 14, no.1, (September 1970), 27-46, quotes, as an example of verbal play on 'dual identities', Shakespeare's Viola disguised as Cesario, longing 'for a beard - but not on her own chin' (p.33).
43. John M. Garrett (London : Chappell, 1976).
44. Sweet Saturday Night (1967), p.30.
45. Ibid., p.60.
46. In music hall songs, the sea-side is frequently cited as an alternative location to the capital city. It signifies a hard earned respite from the work-day world and an occasion for 'spooning'. In Tilley's songs, romance at the sea-side is used to offset the poignant references to poverty in 'By the Sad Sea Waves' and 'In the Pale Moonlight'; painting over the cracks of a tough working-class existence.
47. See Cyril Pearl, The Girl with the Swansdown Seat (London : Frederick Muller,

1955), section 'The Victorian Reality', chapter 2, 'Go West, Young Man'.

48. In the first verse of 'Burlington Bertie', it is stated that, 'He spends the good oof that his pater has made', and 'Algy' has 'just come into heaps of coin, he don't know what he's worth'.
49. See Cyril Pearl (1955), section, 'London Amuses Itself', chapter 1, 'The Levelling Polka'.
50. George Le Roy, Music Hall Stars of the Nineties (London : British Technical and General Press, 1952), p.52.
51. The British Music Hall (New York : Oak Publications, 1971), p.139.
52. For example, James Agate, Buzz, Buzz! : Essays of the Theatre (London : Collins, 1918), describes the 'meaning' of some of 'Miss Tilley's' gestures, stating, 'the unbuttoning of a coat serves to let you into the secrets of a second verse and the hidden mysteries of a character not more than waistcoat deep, whilst the cock-sure tap settling the hat is to stand for the assertion that these young men are "all right!"' (p.168).
53. Disher (1938), pp.78-80. James Agate, 'Some Pantomime Songs', James Agate an Anthology, edited by Herbert Van Thal (London : Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961), pp.202-7 describes this song as 'the first best statement for and against seaside flirtation' (p.203).
54. Senelick, p.40.
55. See Tilley's autobiography, pp.142-3.
56. To support this view, Julie Holledge in Innocent Flowers (London : Virago, 1981), in her comments on the 'concert' parties organized by the 'Actress's Franchise League', for entertaining the troops, states that 'the actresses were back in their time-worn roles - an image of beauty like a china tea-cup with sexual over-tones' (p.100).
57. The verse is quoted in Lovely Peggy by Janet Camden Lucy (London : Hurst and Blackett, 1952), p.59.
58. Senelick, p.36.
59. Autobiography, pp.233-4.
60. MacInnes (1967), p.79.
61. 'Male Impersonators', The Saturday Book, no. 29 (London : Hutchinson, 1969), 245-252 (p.250).
62. Senelick, p.40.
63. Music Hall in Britain (1974), p.79. Vest Tilley retired in June 1920 and not June 1922, as Cheshire states.
64. The existence of this book, allegedly prepared by the German secret service, was brought to the public's attention by Noel Pemberton Billing, in an article for his newspaper the Vigilante, headed 'The Cult of the Clitoris' and also implicating the dancer Maud Allen, performing in Wilde's Salomé as one of the 47,000. Maud Allen brought a libel suit against Billing, which she ultimately lost. For details see Michael Kettle's, Salomé's Last Veil (London : New York : Hart Davis and MacGibbon, 1977).
65. 'Fascinating Aida', however, wear exceptionally feminized dress costumes in order to push the stereotypical image of woman as sex object to the point of grotesque caricature.

Chapter 6 : Pantomime's Principal Boys

Vesta Tilley's representation of the 'third sex' was an androgynous image which also featured in Victorian and Edwardian pantomime, in the princely shape of the principal boys. In nineteenth-century pantomime, the archetypal, asexual-Romeo-figure, was essential to the fairytale narrative, which acted out the story for which the 'Prince Charming' image, such as Tilley's, was a form of shorthand. As in the case of music hall, to understand the image and role, its emergence and development, requires contextualisation, in terms of this second form of popular entertainment.¹

Briefly, pantomime in England had been pioneered by John Rich in the eighteenth century in the form of a harlequinade. Rich, at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, along with his Drury Lane rival, Garrick, and subsequently Sheridan, established the structure of Regency pantomime. It consisted of an 'opening' scene, a transformation scene, in which a good agent turns the characters into a harlequinade to protect the would-be lover/harlequin, from the anger of his future in-laws, and a peripatetic moment or 'dark' scene, prior to an ultimate reconciliation, brought about by the benevolent deus ex machina. Early nineteenth-century pantomime was highly satirical, with current affairs, law and order and contemporary theatre amongst its comic targets.

The accession of Victoria to the throne in 1837 marked a moral change of tone in pantomime entertainment and heralded its identity as family, Christmas entertainment. Previously, it had been performed at other times of the year, even if originally given as a Christmas piece, and generally as an afterpiece to an extensive theatre programme. Relegated from these new, clean-cut, moral, fairy stories, the satirical elements were exploited in the 'adult' world of extravaganza and burlesque. These kindred forms of 'holiday theatre',² are hard to distinguish as characteristics overlap and vary in defining emphasis from decade to decade.³

The structure of pantomime altered significantly as the harlequinade was gradually reduced and the opening expanded. By the 1890's the opening scenes

had consequently expanded to between 7 and 12 scenes and the harlequinade did not exceed 3. Pantomime had undergone further changes, having been encroached upon by burlesque, music hall and opera bouffe in the 1860's, and by the 1870's the music hall invasion of pantomime was clearly established, chiefly due to Augustus Harris who took over Drury Lane in 1879 and made it the number one house for pantomime throughout his seventeen years of administration, succeeded on his demise by Arthur Collins, who continued Harris's enterprise until 1924. Hence, the harlequinade was further relegated in favour of individual music hall acts and turns, proving popular box office draws, in spite of protests over the invasion of family entertainment by the disreputable artistes of the halls.

The principal boy begins to make his/her appearance in the early nineteenth-century pantomime. David Mayer quotes the first breeches role in nineteenth-century pantomime as the opening to Farley's Harlequin and Fortunio (1815),⁴ although the plot of the pantomime insists that the impersonation be unmasked and the girl dressed in male attire be transformed into Columbine. In 1819, Eliza Povey played Jack in Jack and the Beanstalk or Harlequin and the Ogre, but when it came to the transformation, she left the stage and Jack Bologna entered as Harlequin to finish the pantomime. It was not until the 1830's and the advent of Elizabeth Poole in Covent Garden's Jack and the Beanstalk (1831), that the role of principal boy became firmly established.

As the century progressed and the interaction between music hall and Christmas pantomime increased, stars of the halls proved a guarantee of box-office success, and a large crop of the principal boys were male impersonators and music hall acts in their own right. Not all of them promoted the boyish image. The popular mid-century alternative was the buxom, statuesque, scantily clad (by Victorian standards), 'Prince Charming', who reverted to the eighteenth-century breeches role tradition of using male attire in order to emphasize femininity and sexuality.

Assessing why the role of principal boy emerged when it did and why there were two types which reached heights of popularity at different times, is a complex task. In terms of theatre history, David Mayer argues persuasively for the role's establishment and development as a response to the need for variety and novelty

on the death of the clown, Grimaldi, whose talents and antics had popularized the harlequinade in Regency pantomime.⁵ As audiences were accustomed to the novelty of breeches roles in other forms of popular entertainment, notably due to the 'Adonis', Mme Vestris, this provided a ready means of entertainment for filling the gap left by Grimaldi. It was therefore an important factor in bringing about the decline of the harlequinade, and encouraging the development of the opening scene. For, with the advent of two women playing opposite each other as principal boy and girl, it was necessary to minimize the courtship role, thereby reducing parental anger, the whole justification for the grand chase in the harlequinade.⁶

Less convincing is Mayer's Freudian reading⁷ of the 1830's androgynous, principal boy which he proposes is a response to the competition working class women posed for men in industry. He claims that the role arose as a 'creation of male anxiety' and allowed, 'both men and women to confront and to contemplate female power, to admit in fantasy that an aggressive woman rivals a man, even to the point of pursuing the girl who is to become Columbine'.⁸ Mayer's implication that women had gained an assertive power within the industrial work force is misleading. As he subtitles this part of his argument, 'Emasculating the Emancipated Woman', he implies that the cheap labour market of women is a form of female emancipation. However, the result of low wages for everyone did not entail economic independence for women, rather, the necessity for all members of the family to join the work force. Certainly, as Mayer argues by citing social historian, E.P. Thompson, men encountered humiliation in such dependence, but to suggest the principal boy as a creation for relieving such anxieties, makes an enormous and unchallenged leap between social history and Freudian psychology. As pantomime librettists and arrangers constituted a male domain, the role was arguably a male creation, but as Regency pantomime was played in the respectable middle class venues of Drury Lane, Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells, it is unlikely that the format should reflect the anxieties of the working class male; rather male sympathies were more probably aligned with the interests of capitalism which welcomed women as a cheap labour force and did not view them as wage earning rivals.

In pursuing his singular, Freudian reading, Mayer overlooks an important factor and more persuasive argument. He fails to consider the cultural climate of the 1830's which demonstrated a marked preoccupation with the vision of the androgyne. French literature and philosophy of the period were notably engaged in exploring the concept of two sexes in one, two of the most famous examples being Gautier's Mlle de Maupin (1835) and Balzac's Séraphita (1835). Both works have protagonists whose changing sexual identities undermine the western notion of a 'true sex'. A new religion had also come to public attention. Based on the teachings of Saint Simon, it advocated in its doctrine, a union of ideal man and ideal woman as the social unit, a unity of the sexes creating a perfect whole.⁹

Reports on these ideas and translations filtered through to the English public. An exchange of ideas on equality between the sexes was conducted through the Saint Simonist papers, the French feminist journalism which succeeded them, and the socialist papers in England, founded at the instigation of Robert Owen and his supporters. Many arguments pertaining to the qualities and equalities of the sexes appeared throughout the 30's, often reflecting the notion of taking the best qualities of either sex to form a perfect whole.¹⁰

The 1830's androgynous, principal boy is therefore a further manifestation of a widespread, cultural, philosophical and social interest in the image of the two sexes in one. It is also important to understand how the image was viewed or seen. A.J.L. Busst in, 'The Image of the Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century', argues that the concept of the androgyne precedes its representation, 'the originals are still the product of the mind, for they are not copied from anything that exists in reality'.¹¹ Hence the image does not reflect an 'intrinsic quality', but the 'mentality' of the viewer. In the case of the 1830's androgyne, the image is seen as an ideal amalgamation of the sexes. To elude gender definition is to achieve immortality and perfection, gender definition conversely signifying mortality and imperfection. The androgynous principal boy shares with Mlle de Maupin and Séraphita/Séraphitus, an evasion of the 'true sex' definition and physical love, which promotes them to a spiritual plane of ideals, as opposed to realities. We have no written or pictorial information to tell us this asexual vision signifies

the ideal lover but that is how the image is seen and the fairy tale narrative, which has all the red roses and none of the thorns, confirms it. A slight female figure masquerading in male dress corresponds to an image of the archetypal lover in a way that it is impossible for a male principal boy, however 'Adonis-like', to emulate, for his maleness betrays gender, Romance, Magic and perfection. As A.E. Wilson reacted on the innovation of the male principal boy at Drury Lane :

As long as I am able to see pantomime I hope I shall never again be afflicted with the spectacle of the male principal boy. As The Stage said when Drury Lane first introduced the innovation :

'The male hero can scarcely be an arch, light or airy comedian with nods and becks and wreathed smiles. He will have to persuade us that he is not merely a person of rare and miraculous power but also a lover in earnest. With a principal boy who is obviously a masquerading girl we don't trouble about these things..A principal boy must be a girl just as a Pantomime dame must be a man...There may be no such dame in real life and certainly there are no such young men as sparkling principal boys with their twinkling feet and nimble voices, but these facts make for the distinction of the entertainment and add to the right spirit. 12

In mid-century, as David Mayer points out, this androgynous principal boy is transformed into a more buxom, 'adult' counterpart, but before^{one} accounts for this second type, the androgyne requires a codicil, for contrary to Mayer's implication, it did not die out completely.

In part this was due to the way in which actresses generally began their careers at an early age and found the role a means to a successful début, as for instance, in the case of Vesta Tilley, whose first appearance was made at the age of thirteen as Robinson Crusoe at the Theatre Royal, Portsmouth. Using asexual children in the principal roles was one way of fulfilling the need for novelty as is generally the case with child prodigies in the entertainment business. 13

Furthermore, an androgynous, boyish appeal might be a prerequisite of the role itself, as was the case in the most popular of Edwardian Christmas entertainment, Peter Pan, by J.M. Barrie, first performed in 1904 at the Duke of York's Theatre, with Nina Boucicault as Peter Pan. In this 'delightful fantasy of childhood', 14 it was Nina Boucicault's suitability for, and performance of, the title role, which accounted for the pantomime's initial success :



Sketch from the Daily Telegraph of the 'Peter Pan' costume

No one could more befit the title-rôle than Miss Boucicault, who, with all a boy's animation, preserved the spirit of the part throughout its arduous length. She was chivalrous as leader of the boyish band, yet there was an ingenuousness and a gaiety that made the droll lines of the part sharp and clear. 15

Costumed in a dress of shaded red leaves, with spider webs draped under the arms, Nina Boucicault's slight, boyish physique, encapsulated the magic of the Peter Pan, androgyne. Played as 'the queer boy who had never known a mother's love',¹⁶ and determined never to grow up, the ^{lead in the} original production focused on the pathos of the immortality and isolation of Pan's asexuality. A.B. Walkley's account of the play,¹⁷ points out the desire of Peter Pan's band of motherless boys to find a mother figure in Wendy. However, 'the motherhood of Wendy involved the fatherhood of Peter Pan', and this, as Walkley points out, 'is extremely distasteful, not only to the Pirates, but also to the Redskins, and even to the fairy Tinker Bell'.¹⁸ More importantly, perhaps, it conflicts with the whole concept of a 'Never Never Land'. To be a partnered, gender-defined being, is to contradict the asexual, solitary condition of the androgyne. Like Balzac's *Séraphita* or Gautier's *Mlle de Maupin*, Peter Pan is a concept, not a reality, and cannot hold a place in the 'physical' world, as indicated in the final image of his solitary, longing gaze through the nursery window.¹⁹

To understand the Edwardian fascination for Peter Pan and its continued Christmas successes, is to understand the Edwardian curiosity and delight in the fantastic and magical. Samuel Hynes in The Edwardian Turn of Mind compares the Edwardian's delight in fantastic literature in its relation to the main body of English literature, to the need for a 'spiritual reality' to counter balance the dominant, scientific truths of the era, in spite of illogicalities.²⁰ This need or desire for the magical in defiance of the logical, is clearly illustrated in Max Beerbohm's account of 'The Child Barrie'; a contemporary account which bears out this quirk of the 'Edwardian turn of mind' :

It is only the man of genius who never experiences this vain regret - never hankers after childhood, with all its material and moral discomforts, for sake of the spiritual magic in it. For the man of genius is that rare creature in whom imagination, not ousted by logic in full growth, abides, uncramped, in unison with full-grown

logic. Mr Barrie is not that rare creature, a man of genius. He is something even more rare - a child who, by some divine grace, can express through an artistic medium the childishness that is in him. 21

Peter Pan has remained popular Christmas entertainment throughout the twentieth century, notably revived in 1982 and subsequent years, by the RSC. On occasion, revivals recapture the Edwardian magic and pathos of the androgyne, though more often than not, the original is betrayed, by the relegation of the magical to little more than a series of comic routines based on a familiar plot. 22

Though the androgynous principal boy emerges in the 1830's, the full-figured, 'female-boys' do not come to the fore until the 1850's. Mayer continues with his methodology of social history and Freudian psychology, to propose this as symptomatic of the competition women posed to the working class labour market, as opposed to child labourers who were no longer a direct threat. 23 This is again to ignore a very obvious factor which accounts for the emergence of the type, which is ^{its relation to} the changing moral climate.

Victorian morality insisted on the family as the foundation of society and on marriage as the licence for sexual relations. Yet ironically, by introducing a value system which entailed rigid demarcation between licit and illicit sex, the demand for the latter increased rapidly. The mid-nineteenth century painted on its mask of respectability, but behind the scenes, porno-graphy and prostitution were on the increase. The buxom, principal boy emerges at a time when respectability covers a multitude of sins and 'Prince Charming' has more to do with a show of legs and corseted torsos, than a prince in a children's fairy story. These ample-figured, provocative 'adult-boys' were to become even more popular in the 70's and onwards, given that a puritanical shift in public morals tried to clamp down on the laxity of the 50's and 60's by closing various entertainment outlets; night-houses and casinos and their prostitution trades. 24 This therefore placed a greater emphasis on music hall entertainment which also catered for the prostitute trade, as explained in the last chapter. Augustus Harris's strategy of flooding pantomime with the music hall stars therefore brought the double face of respectability to pantomime; the voyeuristic pleasure of a scantily clad female, sanctioned by the



Two 'adult' principal boys. Above, Florrie Ford. Below, Harriet Vernon.



fairytale framework of family entertainment.

There are various indicators which point towards the increasing 'doublefaced' trend in pantomime and give credence to this argument. Notably, several accounts of Christmas productions complain of pantomime's decline, attributed in the main to the 'vulgar' music hall invasion :

The floodgates of the music halls were opened, and all that was agreeable about the "grand comic Christmas pantomime" was promptly and effectually drowned out. Then followed a period, out of which we have not yet fully emerged, of hopeless, inane, and offensive vulgarity all over the country - a vulgarity which, it is not at all pleasant to think, has been of a most popular kind, and highly remunerative to performers and managers alike. 25

Adjacent to this complaint in the Theatre, is a further lament by T. Edgar Pemberton on the difficulties of scripting a pantomime. He discovered that a script founded chiefly on a fairytale proved outmoded and unamusing and left him ruminating on, 'whether the time was not ripe for a children's pantomime, or whether my pantomime was not ripe enough for the children, and, like other unripe things, disagreed with them'.²⁶ Having witnessed his 'elfin episodes' transformed into advertisements for 'semi-transparent soaps', and noted the absence of much of his scripted libretto, it is clear that the success of pantomime no longer depended on its fairytale backbone and relied wholly on novelties and music hall turns. Pantomime had become an excuse for a lucrative, commercial enterprise.

One of the prime examples of pantomime's double face of respectability is Marie Lloyd as the principal boy's principal girl in some of the 1890's Drury Lane productions. As a music hall artiste, she demonstrated the power of ⁱⁿfluendo and suggestive silence to pepper an apparently innocent act with a flavour of sauciness. Her reputed 'naughtiness' is denoted in her pose for the Drury Lane programme of the Humpty Dumpty production of 1891-2, in which she played Princess Allfair. Connotations of the fairytale, child-princess, denoted by the costume semiotics, are dwarfed by the obtrusive sexual pout by which she challenges the addressee; the baby doll disguise provocatively pierced by the blatantly sexual pose, whose facial and physical attitudes denote sexual availability.²⁷



Above, Marie Lloyd on the front cover of the 'Book of Words' for Drury Lane's Humpty Dumpty, 1891-2. Below, Marie Lloyd as Polly Perkins in Drury Lane's Robinson Crusoe, 1893.



As for the buxom mould of principal boy, her statuesque figure was as much a sex object then, as the long-legged, wispy models and pop-stars are in the role to-day; even more so perhaps, because of the nineteenth-century cult to keep the female body from public display. Accustomed as we are now to an ideology based on the 'slim is beautiful' ethic, the heavily built Victorian and Edwardian stars appear incongruous with the notion of a sex symbol, but beauty then was based on small waists and full-rounded figures.²⁸ The décolleté fashions in the mid-century were de rigueur and there was nothing vulgar about exposing fleshy torsos, but legs (hips, thighs and ankles), were never to be seen. They were cleverly hidden from view, boxed in all manner of crinolines, bustles, hoops and wires. Hence the short, corseted costume of the seventies and onwards, is incredibly daring for the period, though offsetting its potential vulgarity, again by the contextual, theatrical framework, and in terms of actual costume, by the additional ornament of voluminous, ermine-trimmed cloaks and large feathered hats, foregrounding the majestic, regal connotations of the role.

Having described and accounted for the emergence and presence of the two types of principal boys during the course of pantomime's history in the last century, it remains to look more closely at the structure and function of the role, and in detail at some of the most popular principal boys. As Drury Lane was the West End theatre for pantomime of the period, in fact was, as some lamented, virtually the only major West End home for pantomime by the 1890's;²⁹ it is this venue and its principal boys which requires special reference.³⁰

The Edwardian pantomime is closer to our own contemporary experience of the Christmas entertainment, given that the original 'opening' scene had become the main feature of the show and the harlequinade was now divorced from the main fairytale narrative and generally described as 'entertaining in quite the old-fashioned way'.³¹ The Drury Lane pantomime was split into two halves, the first ending with a ballet or some form of chorus ensemble, leaving the audience with a fifteen minute interval before the visual feast of the second half. Scene divisions in the scripts were indicated not by a list of acts or scenes, but by a 'synopsis of scenery'.

Based on the preconceived fairy tale structure, the world of poetic justice, where the good receive their reward and the bad are punished, the pantomime structure offered both a sense of control and wish fulfillment for its audience. Like the private daydream, in which one structures and chooses a content according to unfulfilled desires, the pleasure of pantomime lies in the familiarity of the daydream, the control over the inward vision; the 'eye' seeing inwards, playing both leading role and omniscient narrator. The content of such a dream is based on unfulfilled longings; the gaps and silences of the ideology by which we are forced to give expression to our lives. The repetition of the daydream does not imply a completeness, but a sense of lack; desire which we know will never be satisfied in the world as we express it. Late nineteenth-century pantomime whose structure permits such impossible goals as true love and happiness, is, to borrow Rosemary Jackson's terminology in her study Fantasy, a 'literature of desire'; a desire based on a 'lack' created by 'cultural constraints'.³² In identifying the fairy story as belonging to the category of the 'marvellous narrative', Jackson underlines the passivity of the receiver in relation to the 'preconceived pattern' of events transmitted.³³

The notion of the fantastic mode as an expression of desire^{both} is pertinent, to the general understanding of the nineteenth-century need for escapist outlets from the rigors of the age of science, as Hynes suggested, and also is relevant in a specific way to the narrative function of the principal boy who acts out the role of the archetypal lover signifying the Romance absent from the 'real' world. It is always the destiny of the would-be-Romeo-lover to ultimately be united with the princess. As the role of principal boy was now accepted as being played by a woman, it was, on the one hand, in keeping with the topsy-turvy gender world of misrule, but on the other, threatened to embody lesbian connotations, causing offence to a 'clean-minded' Victorian audience. Given that the plot demanded that the principal boy pursue the heroine, such connotations were defused by reducing the opportunity for the principal boy and girl to appear in each other's company. Such opportunities were thwarted by what Northrop Frye, in his essay on comedy,³⁴ terms the 'blocking' characters or alazon group,

which were as a rule, parental. Only at the very end of the tale are the couple united in some form of grand wedding page^ant, symbolizing the beginning of the 'happy ever after'. The main part of the plot is therefore taken up with the struggles and tasks, the overcoming of opposition before a union is possible. As Frye states, 'the context of eiron and alazon forms the basis of the comic action, and the buffoon and the churl polarize the comic mood'.³⁵ The eiron group to which the lovers belong, tend, Frye explains, to be less interesting, 'neutral and unformed in character', than the alazons. Studying the scripts and reviews of the pantomimes, it is clear that this rule of comedy applied. The partnership of principal boy and girl was never given as great a part as the alazon group and those 'buffoon' characters which created the 'comic mood'. This is particularly true of the Drury Lane pantomimes during the great part^tnership of comedians Leno and Campbell who dominated the shows through their comic team work, and it is also clear that audiences were not keen on long courtship scenes, as can be seen from this review of a production of Red Riding Hood at the Novelty Theatre, in December 1876 :

To the solo it [the audience] is tolerant, but slightly indifferent, and unconsciously imitates its betters by seeking refuge in animated conversation; though in justice it must be said that this distraction never finds the pit and gallery unprepared to help the vocalist out with his or her top-notes. To patriotic sentiment and to domestic sentiment, especially of the lugubrious kind, the house always responds; but, curiously enough, the tender incidents of courtship invariably excite ridicule, which is generally expressed by the cat-call. 36

From the scripts studied (as previously described), it is evident that the struggles of the love quest moved the action of the pantomime forward, as well as providing occasion for the comedy. In Drury Lane's The Forty Thieves (1898-9), Ali Baba's son Ganem, played by the popular principal boy Miss Nellie Stewart, wishes to marry his father's slave, Morgiana, but is opposed by his father. Their union is only finally condoned after a series of tasks in which Ganem helps his father to get rid of the thieves, the ultimate task being the killing of the robbers in the casks. Hence the love quest between the principal boy and girl forms an integral part of the comic action based on the struggles between Ali Baba and

the band of thieves.

In the 1903-4 Humpty Dumpty production, the love quest evolves from Blossom's (the principal girl's) quest for identity. She has no father and mother and enters the land of 'Don't Know' in order to find herself. The logic of the world of 'Don't Know' is very much in the 'looking glass' mould :

Scarecrow : If you aren't the lost Princess, who are you?

Blossom : Nobody.

Scarecrow : Very well; as you're not nobody, you must be the lost Princess. 37

Blossom falls in love with Prince Rudolph, ^{but} ⁱⁿ the ^{the} union is only possible after ^{the} finding of a magic ring, which confirms her identity as the king's long lost daughter, a task constantly thwarted by the mischievous misrule of Humpty Dumpty.

Sleeping Beauty at Drury Lane in 1912-3, which combined two fairy tales, a technique favoured by librettists, had a complicated twist to the quest, in which the princess having been found by her prince, loses him again when he is transformed by black magic into a beast. In this production Drury Lane deviated from tradition by having the role of prince Auriol played by a man.³⁸ The part was not a popular one, given that the player had to appear in a masked form as the beast for a large part of the pantomime. Vesta Tilley records her dismay at her only principal Drury Lane pantomime appearance in the role, in the 1890-1, Beauty and the Beast production :

Imagine my dismay when at rehearsal I found that after the second scene the Prince was turned into the Beast by the wicked fairy, and I would be obliged to play the character until the final scene with an enormous beast's mask covering my head and shoulders. Apart from the inconvenience, what chance had I of introducing songs calling for acting and expression through a beast's mask ? 39

Had Vesta Tilley not had such an unfortunate encounter with Drury Lane, she would probably have gone on to be one of its most famous and popular principal boys. However, such Drury Lane successes were to be honours shared amongst several of her contemporaries.

Throughout the 1870's and '80's, the majority of the principal boys came



Drury Lane's Sinbad the Sailor, 1882. Above, Nelly Power as Sinbad.
Below, Vesta Tilley as second principal boy, 'Captain Tra-la-la'.



from the burlesque stage and pantomime enthusiasts list several of these. In the early 1880's Nellie Power, who died very young, was still the most popular Drury principal boy, and Tilley in fact played alongside her in a minor role, as second principal boy, in the Sinbad production of 1882. From the mid 1880's the best remembered and most frequently cited 'boy' is the imposing Harriet Vernon. ~~She~~ belonged to the 'adult' principal boy tradition^{and} A.E. Wilson recollects her as follows:

She was a handsome, statuesque creature with a fine, ample presence and she was a sight for the gods when she took the stage, jewelled stick in hand and decked out with diamonds and ostrich plumes. With her rich, deep voice she could give every bit of effect to her rousing songs. One can still hear her demanding, 'Where are the boys of the old brigade?' and can see her marching majestically at the head of a glittering procession. There could be no doubt who was principal when she was on the stage. 40

In December 1888 she made a dashing Robin Hood with an all-female band of merry men and was a 'bright and pleasant Jack' in Jack and the Beanstalk the following year.

Prince of principal boys at Drury Lane in the 1890's was Ada Blanche, who unlike Harriet Vernon belonged to the boyish, androgynous type and provides a further instance of the way in which this type did not, as is sometimes implied, fade away. In a star-studded cast, including Leno and Campbell, Marie Loftus as Little Bo-Peep and Marie Lloyd as Red Riding Hood, she made her début at Drury Lane as Little Boy Blue in December 1892, and remained at the house for the next six seasons. The detail with which her performances were reviewed by the Era during these years, provides a general indication of the qualities required for the role. Her performance as Dick Wittington in 1894-5 was described as follows :

Miss Blanche has, besides her expressive features and stately figure, many qualities which fit her for the post of principal boy. Her elocution is excellent. She has decided dramatic aptitude; and she is a good singer. She is full of briskness and vivacity, and her dash and emphasis never degenerate to vulgarity or boisterousness. Her Wittington is a bright, free and cheerful boy, and her performance is equally exempt from exaggeration and tameness. She is excellent throughout - never over-acting - never flagging; and all she does is accomplished without any apparent effort. All these good qualities combined make Miss Blanche's performance a particularly good one. 42



Fanny Leslie's Robinson Crusoe, Drury Lane 1881

High praise was forthcoming for her Aladdin in 1896-7 :

Seldom, surely, has the roguish hero been more merrily, more spiritedly, and more attractively interpreted. Miss Blanche's prime merit is that she always acts her pantomime parts as conscientiously as though they were comedy creations of the best. As Aladdin she has hardly enough to say and sing, but she does her work with admirable smartness and spirit. Her most dramatic effort, perhaps, is made in the scene in which Aladdin first beholds the Princess, and here Miss Blanche's expression of admiring passion is very real and effective. She and Miss Decima Moore as the Princess Badroulbadoor are, indeed a "pretty pair". 43

In short, good looks, singing as well as acting ability and plenty of energy were essential qualities for the part, and tendencies towards the vulgar, or over-energetic and exaggerated, were to be studiously avoided.

The Victorian and Edwardian principal boy stars were indeed numerous. Reviewers recall the talents of Fanny Leslie, admired for her performance as Robinson Crusoe in 1881 and her nimble dancing as King Dulcima in the Humpty Dumpty production of 1891; the commanding figure of Miss Alexandre Dagmar as Dandini in the Drury Cinderella, 1895, in which she was noted for the rendition of a drinking song; the beautiful Nellie Stewart as the dashing Ganem in The Forty Thieves of 1898; the shapely form of Queenie Leighton as the prince in the 1905 Cinderella and the imposing figure of Australian born, music hall chorus singer, Florrie Ford, playing principal boys up until the 1930's. For these women their training ground was the burlesque stage and their decline links, as A.E. Wilson notes, with decline of music hall and burlesque :

Vanished with burlesque and old-time music-hall are the robust burlesque artistes and serio-comics who, ample in figure, could make an imposing entry, slap a handsome thigh, dazzle with superb assurance and sheer weight and shake the very rafters with rousing song choruses. They have given place to those who, daintier perhaps in their methods, are less assured in approach, less friendly in manner, less imposing in physique and alas less vocally gifted. I think it was James Agate who once stipulated that the ideal principal boy should convey the impression that she had dined on tripe-and-onions and stout, whereas your little slip of a thing of to-day is more likely to suggest that her diet is habitually one of tea and chocolate éclairs. 44

The tradition continued to survive, however, throughout the first half of the century, particularly in provincial pantomime, and was broken by a new trend of



Ada Blanche as Robinson Crusoe, Drury Lane, 1893.



Hetty King, male impersonator and principal boy, as Aladdin, Royal Court Theatre, Liverpool, 1904.

Alexandra Dagmar's Dandini, Cinderella, Drury Lane, 1895.



Queenie Leighton as the principal boy in Drury Lane's Cinderella, 1905.



male, comedian and popstar principals in the 1950's.

A study of the principal boy requires a final point of reference, namely the role's relation to the dame. Just as it was traditional for the principal boy to be played by a woman, it was also usual for the dame figure to be played by a man and Dan Leno was Drury Lane's most talented and famous dame. However, it did not follow that the transvestism necessitated their playing as opposites. Their narrative functions generally placed them in opposite camps; the dame featured generally in the blocking, alazon group and the principal boy in the eiron, which constituted a conflict of interest. Exceptions were those pantomimes such as Aladdin where the dame is mother to the principal boy and may assume the role of ally rather than opponent.

The dame has always received more critical attention than the principal boy. It has usually been played as a figure of fun; as a means of ridiculing women, the stereotypical dame being ugly, overweight, but still in possession of an alarming sexual appetite; a threat to the middle-aged, wealthy bachelor. General critical opinion states that it is impossible for the male impersonator to subvert in the same way, because only the 'culturally non-normative, abnormal, subnormal, and deviant can be mimicked', ⁴⁵ and men are therefore apparently exempt. The example of the music hall impersonator in the previous chapter is refutation in itself of this argument, as it demonstrates that a female performer in male disguise may successfully emulate men with the object of ridicule and satire. The reason why the principal boy does not function in the same way and does not subvert, is in the main, to ^{be found in} its narrative function. Its eiron classification means it must be as magical, Romantic, and successful, as the alazon dame is comical, ridiculous and defeated. Pantomime gave licence to gender swapping, but the nineteenth-century audience demanded that their 'hero' was a desirable correlative of the 'happy ever after'.

With the advent of comedians à la Charlie Chaplin, a new type of hero was born, in which the ordinary, unremarkable, unprepossessing, comical male is the hero, and whose narrative function becomes the combination of alazon and eiron. This accounts, in part, for the way in which much of contemporary pantomime

has been stripped of its magic in favour of comic routines. The shell and conventions remain, but they are only conventions. There is no 'desire' for a mythical land of the 'happy ever after' which has long since been replaced by a demythologized world in which laughter and tears are inseparable.

Notes to Chapter 6 : Pantomime's Principal Boys

1. For surveys of pantomime, I am indebted to the following; David Mayer, Harlequin in his Element : The English Pantomime 1806-1836 (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 1969); R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, Pantomime : A Story in Pictures (London : Peter Davies, 1973); A.E.Wilson, Pantomime Pageant (London : Stanley Paul, 1946) and Michael Booth, English Plays of the Nineteenth Century, volume 5, Extravaganzas and Burlesques (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1976).
2. Michael Booth (1976), p.2.
3. Michael Booth states, 'From the point of view of definition, it is not easy to distinguish between extravaganza and burlesque. However, problems of definition are so common in dealing with nineteenth-century drama that one should not worry about them; better to indicate characteristics, similarities, and differences rather than frame imprecise definitions of little value'. (p.26)
4. See Mayer (1969), chapter 2, 'The structures of Pantomime 1806-1836', p. 64.
5. See Mayer (1969), chapter ix, 'Harlequin Out of Place' , pp.309-327.
6. Other factors, in addition to those cited, which contributed to the decline of the harlequinade in the first part of the century were the licensing act of 1843, which allowed for a verbal contribution and the increasing emphasis on theatrical spectacle, which invited lavish staging and grand dircemas. particularly for the 'opening' scene.
7. Put forward in his article, 'The Sexuality of Pantomime', Theatre Quarterly, 4, no.13 (February - April, 1974), 55-64.
8. Ibid., p.61.
9. One of the movement's chief pontifs, Enfantin, kept an empty chair beside him, hopefully to be filled by a 'Supreme Mother'. The search for the 'Messianic Woman' was never rewarded, inspite of a pilgrimage to the East, prior to the suppression and disbanding of the sect, which established Enfantin's ultimate destiny, as administrator in the Lyons railway!
10. For example, an article by John Goodwyn Barnby for Owen's paper, New Moral World, discusses theories of 'woman power' and 'man power', based on stereotypical characteristics of the sexes, men strong, women gentle, etc., in which an ideal equilibrium between the two would establish 'woman-man-power', on the basis of the best qualities of either sex contained in one individual. The poet Shelley and women's rights advocate Mary Wollstonecroft are cited as prime examples of 'woman-man-power'. For details, see John Killham, Tennyson and 'The Princess' : Reflections of an Age (London : University of London, Athlone Press, 1958), p.54.
11. In, Romantic Mythologies, edited by Ian Fletcher (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp.1-95 (p.2).

12. Pantomime : The Silent Theatre (New York : Atheneum¹⁹⁶⁴), chapter xvi, 'Principal Boys', p.120.
13. The numerous choruses of elfin creatures have also proved a constant source of opportunity for child-entertainers wishing to enter the 'business'. In the Drury Lane heydays of pantomime the choruses of children were trained by Mme Katti Lanner. An article in the Theatre, 'A Pantomime Rehearsal', by A. Ludivici Junr., February 1891, 72-75, records backstage impressions and notes the ambition of the youngsters who severally express their intention of 'making a name for themselves in the annals of the stage'.
14. The Times, 28 December 1904, p.4.
15. Era, 31 December 1904, p.17.
16. Star, 28 December 1904, p.1.
17. Drama and Life (London : Methuen, 1907), pp.209-213.
18. Ibid., p.211.
19. Evasion of gender definition is a constant feature of the androgyne in literature. Séraphitus/Séraphita is ultimately deified as the perfect, eternal Séraphin. Mlle de Maupin leaves in order to maintain the illusion of the asexual ideal; to elude physical love subjected to a destructive reality. In 'decadent' literature of the late nineteenth century, the obsession with the androgyne as an ideal, is best by the destructive quality of gender definition. For example, Joséphin Peladan, a less well known French 'decadent' writer, in his novel, L'androgyne (Paris : Dentu, 1891), describes the fate of an angelic, Jesuit school-boy, whose awakening to sexual passion effects the death of the androgyne and birth of the imperfect male. This is the alternative to Peter Pan's asexual exile; the mortal, destructive and ineludable consequence of gender definition.
20. Hynes (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1971), chapter v, 'Science, Seers, and Sex', p.145.
21. Around Theatres, p.359.
22. For instance, the Guardian reviewer (21 December 1984, p.8.), regretted the 'jovial lightness' of the RSC's revival and its several 'caricatures', substituted for the 'heartfelt gravity' of the company's 1983 production, and its conception of Peter Pan 'as a bewildered, tormented athletic Ariel figure', more akin to the Edwardian type, though, notably, these modern day Peter Pans are performed by men.
23. Mayer (1974), p.62.
24. See Cyril Pearl, The Girl with the Swansdown Seat (1955), section, 'London Amuses Itself', chapter vi, 'This Freedom', pp.204-211.
As further testimony to the shift in the 70's, A.E. Wilson (1946), notes that during the sixties the principal boys were 'discreetly skirted to the knees'. It was not until the more advanced 'seventies that trunks were worn, the amplitude of thighs was daringly revealed and the major portion of a bare arm audaciously shown' (p.117).
25. 'On the Decadence of Pantomime', Theatre, January 1896, p.24.
26. 'The "Book" of the Pantomime', ibid., p.28.
27. A further example occurs in the Era's description of Marie Lloyd as Polly Perkins in the 1893-4 production of Robinson Crusoe, as the reader is asked to

picture her,

dainty arch, and exquisitely attractive, in the pretty costumes of Polly Perkins, the beloved of Crusoe, acting, dancing, singing- aye, and undressing, too - without a word or an act which could bring the blush of shame to the cheek of consciousness, and yet piquant withal as the best Pimento. (30 December 1893, p. 7)

Again, the attempt to persuade the addressee of her 'innocence' becomes a declaration of her piquant and titillating sauciness.

28. As an illustration of their heavy build, Margot Peters, in her biography of Mrs Patrick Campbell, Mrs Pat (London : Bodley Head, 1984), records the occasion when Mrs Pat was asked to play Aladdin in Ben Greet's company, and was provided with a ready-made costume from a previous pantomime 'boy'. Being of a very slim build, the costume, which was a 'velvet suit', that had been made for 'a very stout woman', did not fit, 'so that the bust had to be stuffed with tissue paper', and needless to say, Mrs Pat, 'went on stage already hating the part' (p.47). Clearly, Mrs Pat's slight build was not that of the average principal boy performer.
29. An article in the Theatre, by S.J. Adair Fitz-Gerald, January 1891, 1-4, records, that in 1883, seven of the thirteen December pantomimes were played in West End venues (the remainder were produced in 'outlying play-houses'), whereas in that year there was only one in the West End, that being played at Drury Lane (p.1).
30. From a special collection of Edwardian pantomime scripts at the University of Warwick Library, it was possible to have access to three of the original 'Books of Words' for the Drury Lane shows, namely, The Forty Thieves (1898-9), Humpty Dumpty (1903-4), and Sleeping Beauty (1912-3). The collection also contains scripts of pantomimes from the Kennington Theatre, the Crown Theatre, Peckham, the Fulham Grand Theatre, the Lyceum, the Grand Theatre, Woolwich, and the Pavilion, Mile End. A total of twelve scripts in all.
31. A phrase coined in The Times, in the review of Robinson Crusoe, at the Lyceum, 27 December 1895, p.5.
32. Jackson (London : Methuen, 1981), p.3.
33. Ibid., p.33.
34. 'The Mythos of Spring : Comedy', from the third essay, 'Archetypal Criticism : Theory of Myths', The Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1957), pp.163-186.
35. Ibid., p.172.
36. The Times, 28 December 1896, p.8.
37. From scene 2 of Humpty Dumpty, by J. Hickory Wood and Arthur Collins; 'Books of Words' (London : J. Miles, 1903-4).
38. An exceptional occurrence which did not happen again until 1957 when Norman Wisom played Aladdin.
39. Autobiography (1934), p.101. It was finally arranged that the part of the beast would be played by Mr John D'Auban, leaving Vesta Tilley free to play a turn at another house. Despite her qualms, the Era's review states that she 'made a handsome and dashing King Courage, and with the multiplied opportunities doubtless to be afforded her as the run proceeds, is sure to enhance her reputation' (3 January, 1891, p. 8).

40. Pantomime Pageant (1946), p.118.
41. Era, 28 December 1889, p. 7.
42. Era, 29 December 1894, p.6.
43. Era, 2 January 1897, p.11.
44. A.E. Wilson (1946), p.119.
45. Janice G. Raymond, The Transsexual Empire (London : Women's Press, 1980), preface, p.xxxvi.

Chapter 7 : Cross-Dressing in the Forest of Arden

The first two chapters of this section have considered forms of male impersonation in popular English culture, the following two will concentrate on examples of English and French actresses from the 'legitimate' stage who encountered the prejudices and problems of cross-dressing. This chapter concentrates on nineteenth-century performances of Shakespeare's As You Like It, as illustrative of the problems cross-dressing presented the 'serious' actress. The following chapter then offers a contrasting example of the French convention of travesti, focusing on Bernhardt's cross-dressing roles, and in particular, her Hamlet.

In accordance with dramatic convention, Shakespearean women were originally played by young men, so that the parts of Viola, Portia or Rosalind, had the unusual twist of being played by a boy, disguising himself as a woman, disguising 'herself' as a boy. Confusion did not arise because the concealment of the 'true sex' of the actor was a recognized convention.

For the nineteenth-century actress, concealing her 'true sex' as part of the plot mechanism threatened to offend audience sensibility, and it was not uncommon for actresses to turn down the roles of Rosalind and Viola, for fear that cross-dressing would cause irreparable damage to their reputations.¹

In spite of the question of respectability, the role was braved by several highly esteemed actresses. William Winter lists 34 actresses amongst those who played the part between 1804 and 1896 on the British stage.² However, in contradiction to what would appear to be an indication of the comedy's popularity, he states earlier, in his discussion of eighteenth-century productions, that, 'it has not, however, at any time been an exceptionally popular play, either in England or America' (p. 233). This might be more accurately understood as never having been popular with the star, actor-manager. As Winter later comments, "'Orlando' is generally regarded by actors as 'a feeder'" and accordingly, few actors like the part : Indeed, it is possible that "Rosalind" sees more in "Orlando" than has ever been seen by anybody else, - for the gaze of love pierces deep' (p.278). Production reviews tend to

support this assertion. On the play's revival at the St James's Theatre, 1896, for example, the reviewer for The Times wrote, 'As You Like It is never out of the bills of the West-End theatres, though it is more frequently in request for the sake of the heroine than the hero, the former being perhaps, if only by dint of her purely idyllic surroundings, the most winning and delightful of all Shakespeare's women'.³ The actor-manager would have an accountable preference for King Lear or Hamlet and the managerial power to enforce his choice on his leading lady. Ellen Terry, for instance, who possessed the prerequisite beauty and talent for Rosalind, never played the part, though she was both Ophelia and Cordelia to Irving's Hamlet and Lear.⁴

For those actresses who did have the opportunity to brave the role, 'presentability', was, as Shaw mischievously suggested, a guarantee against 'failure';⁵ a fine figure and a beautiful face offsetting the mediocrity of acting talent. The actress was not wholly to blame for the difficulty, if not impossibility of capturing the woodland spirit of the imagination, in flesh and blood. Rosalind's signification of pastoral beauty, had, in its literary context, captured the nineteenth-century imagination and George Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth was probably not the only young lady to muse upon her 'extemporised' role of Rosalind inspired by a country walk in the forest.⁶ Yet inevitably, dramatic representation proved a disappointing re-creation of the Arden landscape and its idyllic heroine, so that reviewers frequently mused on the idea of abandoning performances of As You Like It and leaving it as a dramatic text to be read and imagined in the mind's eye.

That it was easier to imagine a Rosalind in doublet and hose than to see her on the stage is also symptomatic of bourgeois 'respectability'. Though middle class audiences enjoyed forms of male impersonation in traditions of popular culture, the swagger and satire of women in male dress was not allowed in 'high art'. West End audiences hypocritically indulged their curiosity for gender inversion in holidays away from the 'serious' stage, but refused to lose sight of the 'true sex' in legitimate drama. For the actress playing Rosalind, this meant that in cross-dressing she had to appear manly enough to deceive Orlando and Phebe, and at the same time, remain sufficiently true to her 'proper' sex, not to offend

audience sensibility. This is clearly at odds with the principal dramatic device based on the assumption that who you are is defined by external appearance; gender is determined by dress. The confusions and complications of the actions arise because characters allow themselves to be deceived by appearances and accept (with minor reservations) that Rosalind's disguise is her 'true' sexual identity.

Foregrounding femininity while emulating male dress, speech and behaviour, was therefore a particular problem for the nineteenth-century actress and how she tackled it, may be judged from a survey of individual stage Rosalinds on record.

The style of Rosalind was established in the mid-nineteenth-century by Shakespearean actress Helena Faucit, who played the part over forty years, giving her final performance in 1879.⁷ She published a study of the role in 1885,⁸ which did much to emphasize the 'high-hearted woman, strong, tender, delicate'(p.239), as opposed to the boyishness invited by the male guise. The widespread influence of her conception of Rosalind is reflected in William Black's actress-novel, In Silk Attire (1869), in which a performance of Rosalind is given by his heroine-actress, Annie Brunel, demonstrating the Faucit charm; 'The timid pleasantries, the tender sadness, the coy love advances, tempered and beautified by that unconscious halo of modesty and virgin grace which surround the gentlest of all Shakespeare's heroines!'⁹ a description which underlines the purity and chastity of the character and by inference, of the actress.

In Annie Brunel's performance, which lacked its usual sparkle and relied on 'the mere charm of admirably artistic acting, combined with a graceful figure and a pretty face', (p.264) as many of the actual nineteenth-century performances did, there is one moment in which she regains the 'master-spell of genius' which is during the presentation of the chain to Orlando. Helena Faucit herself describes how the scene should be played in her later study of 'female characters' and it is worth comparing the two descriptions, in order to note the affinities :

It was where 'Rosalind', having graced the victorious wrestler with a chain from her own neck, is about to go away with 'Celia', and yet is loth to go without having had speech of the young man who has so awakened her interest. The half-interpreted longing, the hesitating glance, and maiden bashfulness with which she turned to him and said :

'Did you call, sir? -
Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown
More than your enemies'.

- her eyes first seeking his face, and then being cast down, as the words became almost inaudible - provoked the house into a sudden tempest of applause which covered her disappearance from the scene. (Black, p.265)

This scene, you will agree, needs most delicate touching in the actress. Rosalind has not much to say, but she has to make her audience feel by subtle indications the revolution that is going on in her heart from the moment her eyes fall upon her future lover, down to the parting glance with which her lingering farewell is accompanied. It is Juliet in the ball-room, but under conditions that demand a far greater variety of expression. There is no avowal of love; but when she leaves the stage, the audience must have been made to feel that in her case, as in Juliet's, her heart has made its choice, and that a change has come over her akin to that which has come over Orlando. (Faucit, p.248)

The performance example from the novel is a practical application of the 'silent suggestive' acting style Helena Faucit describes. Her style and conception of the role had clearly established a point of reference, or blueprint, for future Rosalinds and their audiences.

What it had undeniably foregrounded was the emphasis on the womanliness of the character, now constantly defended by reviewers in order to counteract accusations of immodesty or indecency.¹⁰ Even in Helena Faucit's final performance, a detailed description of which is given by Herman Merivale who played the part of Touchstone in the production, it was, as ever, the womanliness, which shone through her conception of the role :

She is all Rosalind. The sweet round voice, the statuesque and gracious attitudes, the perfect tenderness of conception, and the sustained tone of the grande dame de par le monde, as Brantôme has it, who never forgets her royalty for a moment in the lovely garnish of a boy, all these things go together to make a thing to be remembered of Helen Faucit's Rosalind. 11

The whole 'abiding charm' of her performance, Merivale continues, lay in its 'perfect ladyhood'. Hence, despite Faucit's grandeur, generated by her age and reputation,¹² there still persists a marked tendency to stress the nobility, purity and womanly perfection conceived in the role.

The stagecraft during this production evidently left a lot to be desired.

The production was performed on two nights for which there were two different Rosalinds, Miss Wallis being the second. Both Miss Wallis's account,¹³ and Merivale's, confirm the confusion of the company as they had to place themselves on the two occasions. Miss Wallis herself achieved success in her own right in certain Shakespearean roles, that of Rosalind being one of them.¹⁴

The emphasis on the episode of the chain, to which the extracts cited referred, is an accountable one, for it is the first indication of the heroine's propensity for assertive lovemaking. G.B. Shaw delighted^{ed} in the idea of a heroine who, in the manner of his own assertive, 'new woman', Anne Whitefield, in Man and Superman, 'makes love to the man instead of waiting for the man to make love to her - a piece of natural history which has kept Shakespear's heroine alive, whilst generations of properly governessed young ladies, taught to say 'No' three times at least, have miserably perished'.¹⁵ However, Shaw's was an unconventional, minority taste. Victorian prudery and puritanism was not 'amused' by a woman carrying on her own wooing. Nothing less than a prudent rewriting of the play could avert the offence caused by male attire and assertive wooing scenes. This in fact was precisely what George Sand achieved in her mid-century French translation of the play.

In this most extraordinary adaptation undertaken in 1856,¹⁶ events are so arranged as to make the centre of interest a develop^ging love between Jacques and Célia. The change in focus has as its result, the reduction in emphasis on the relationship between Rosalinde and Roland, and that between Rosalinde and Célia. Rather than express concern for Rosalinde's welfare, Célia is preoccupied with Jacques from the first act onwards. As the two women have Jacques as an escort the necessity for disguise is reduced. There is therefore no scene in which the two women plan this, and Rosalinde simply appears dressed as a page in the second act, immediately recognizes and makes herself known to her exiled father. There then follows an ironic interplay between Roland and Rosalinde. Roland, in an aside, reveals he has recognized Rosalinde, who in turn, in an aside, thinks that he does not know her; a device which denies the complexities of the original wooing scenes, namely, the woman disguised as a man, 'disguised' as a woman. Only one love letter from Roland to Rosalinde is found blown by the wind and as eventually Ros^al^linde is bestowed

on Roland by her father, the dénouement of the play's action is not dependent on her role. In short, Rosalinde is up-staged by her companion Célia and jealous lover Jacques.¹⁷

Countering mainstream prudery were the private open air performances given by the 'Pastoral Players' in the mid 1880's, which daringly multiplied rather than subtracted the gender complication, by having a female Orlando; a dangerous combination in lovemaking scenes.¹⁸ The performances which took place in the summers of 1884 and 1885 were instigated by Lady Archibald Campbell, the female Orlando, in collaboration with architect and designer, E.W. Godwin.¹⁹ The 'Aesthete' circles present on the occasion of these performances, being less prudish than mainstream bourgeois audiences, ensured a favourable reception and the Theatre's reviewer warmly described the 'intelligence grace and feeling' of Miss Calhoun's Rosalind, and the 'artistic and interesting impersonation' of Lady Archibald Campbell's Orlando.²⁰ At the 1885 production, Oscar Wilde particularly warmed to the androgynous spirit abroad, comparing it to Gautier's Mlle de Maupin :

In Théophile Gautier's first novel, that golden book of spirit and sense, that holy writ of beauty, there is a most fascinating account of an amateur performance of As You Like It in the large orangery of a French country house. Yet, lovely as Gautier's description is, the real presentation of the play last week at Coombe seemed to me lovelier still, for not merely were there present in it all those elements of poetry and picturesqueness which le maître impeccable so desired, but to them was added also the exquisite charm of the open woodland and the delightful freedom of the open air. 21

The idea for the performance supposedly originated from Lady Archibald Campbell's portrait painting of Miss Calhoun 'in her Rosalind dress in the wood of Coombe Warren',²² and her attempt to capture the pastoral beauty and woodland spirit, other than on canvas, resulted in the ambitious open air project. Natural woodlands combined with a specially erected curtain to form the set, whilst the stage-hands dressed as shepherds and foresters, and the actors in their period costumes, designed to 'blend picturesquely with the surrounding foliage',²³ crossed the stage accompanied by real animals.

An open air performance added a whole new dimension to 'realistic' theatre,

and perhaps had greater magical potential than a picture-frame stage and handpainted trees, though the use of the 'real' invited other natural, unforeseen hazards, such as inclement weather.²⁴ Mrs Patrick Campbell records the pleasure of participating in an open-air performance, as well as the hazards, and the abandonment of the artificiality which such a venture invited :

...the morning had been dull and the afternoon was cloudy, but it was fine enough for us to act. The scene was most beautiful, great spreading trees at the side of a little open glade. At the back, undulating grounds.

At my first entrance as Ganymede, Lord Pembroke's pugs - he had a special breed of his own - suddenly rushed over the grass to a knoll I had reached, and barked furiously at my long boots.

I am afraid I was delighted at the interruption - I am almost surely a fool over dogs - I stooped down and spoke to them in a special dog language of my own, forgetting for the moment all about Rosalind and the smart audience.

Lord Pembroke, with mingled embarrassment, courtesy, and humour, came across the ground and apologised as he called the dogs away. Perhaps the interruption made my 'Rosalind' more natural. How I loved the beauty of it all. 25

The inclination towards the 'natural' or 'realistic', given the open-air setting, and the aristocratic, 'smart' audience, are features of both the experiments discussed.²⁶

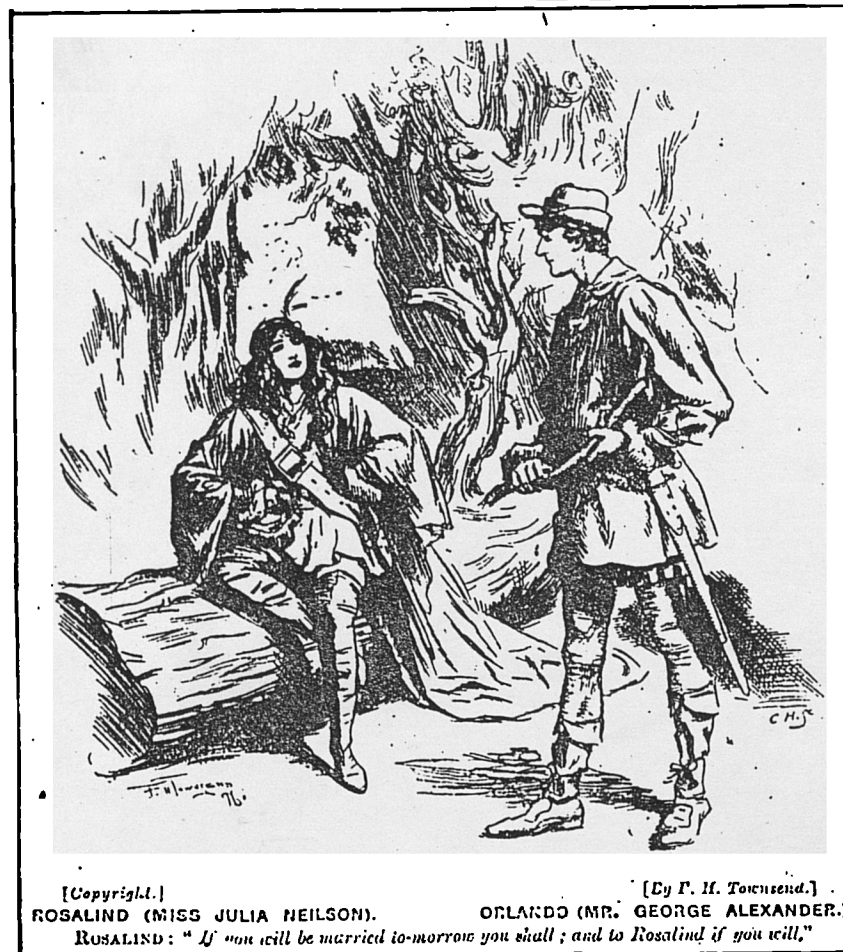
In the mid 1880's the role was also played by the American actress Mary Anderson, at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon, in a benefit for the theatre. It was her first attempt at the role,²⁷ and was not well received by English critics, who in general found her 'neither magnetic nor sympathetic', though William Archer, barring a few minor criticisms, defended the pleasure of her performance.²⁸

Back in the commercial theatre buildings in the 1890's, other actresses braved their reputations in the part of Rosalind. Miss Dorothea Baird's performance as part of the Shakespeare Anniversary Celebration at the Metropole Theatre, Camberwell, April/May, 1896, drew Shaw's homily on the inability of actresses and actors to fail in the parts of Rosalind and Hamlet respectively, finally dismissing Miss Baird's performance as successful merely on the grounds of 'pretty' looks.²⁹

In December of the same year, the part was played by Miss Julia Neilson, who attracted widespread comment. She too earned Shaw's epitaph, 'who ever failed, or could fail, as Rosalind?' and his praise went no further than 'pleasant' or displaying 'personal charm'.³⁰ Others were more enthusiastic. A.B. Walkley in the Speaker



Sketches from the 1896 As You Like It : Above, from the Westminster Gazette,
Below, from the Daily Chronicle



credited her with beauty and intelligence in her conception of the part,³¹ and the Star added 'languorous grace', 'distinction' and 'womanly charm' to her qualities.³²

The kind of beauty required for the part was the lithe, lively, youthful beauty of the androgyne. Ideally the disguised Rosalind should connote the 'third sex'. The youth that Phebe describes, III.5.109-135, is an androgynous, asexual 'pretty youth'; not yet a man (so not posing a sexual threat) and possessing the beauty of a woman (height, legs, lips, cheeks, are favourably described). In short, the ideal 'Prince of Romance'. Such was Neilson's beauty. Some found her effervescent, 'tripping' style reminiscent of Ellen Terry; A.B. Walkley in particular detected it in her 'light and lively' method, which on occasion he found became 'restless'.³³ The Star felt she also had a tendency to mistake 'restlessness' for vivacity and the Westminster Gazette was more harshly critical of her, 'method of rushing and jumping about the stage and incessantly changing the registers of her voice, that proves even irritating at times. Indeed, one sees in her a tendency to the old system of "romping" the part'.³⁴ Overall, however, reviewers indicated that the merits of her performance outweighed its flaws, such as the 'restlessness' or 'tendency to gabble the end of sentences in an ascending key',³⁵ and some were impressed by how much her acting had improved compared to past performances.³⁶

More importantly, she triumphed in the manner in which she was able to cope with cross-dressing. Her scenes in male guise were played 'with the right indication of concealed feeling',³⁷ and,

without lapsing into extravagance either of utterance or of gesture. She indicates Rosalind's gladness of being able under any disguise to discover the true state of Orlando's heart, but is careful not to create the suspicion - as some actresses have done - that the maiden absolutely rejoices in wearing male habiliments, and feels more at ease in them than in the regulation garb of her sex. 38

On the subject of appearance, as stated at the outset, it was vital to avoid a sense of the meretricious. Whereas the principal boy in pantomime was tolerated as part of the topsy-turvy world of comedy, or the male impersonator licenced by the context of music hall, in the theatre, the actress dressed in male attire constantly skated on very thin ice. As late as 1920, Mrs Patrick Campbell records

the persistence of such prejudice, on the occasion of her performance in Madame Sand, when she wore trousers. She cites the following letter from a correspondent:

I am so sorry if I was rude about your trousers, but quite sincerely they wounded me. If only they had been pretty trousers- but they were not. They may be historically correct. But in a play which outrages history in so many vital points, to outrage it further would have offended nobody, and pleased one person at least.³⁹

Neither emulation of male dress, nor any unwomanly display of the female body were tolerated in 'serious' drama. Julia Neilson was congratulated on her costume; for playing, 'the part of Rosalind in the jackboots of tradition, avoiding that display of nether limbs which was affected by the beautiful Mrs Jordan, and with less success by Mrs Langtry'.⁴⁰ Apart from the 'jackboots' of tradition, some actresses also wore a cloak to cover up a large proportion of the body, and used it to remind the audience of the actress's 'proper' sex.⁴¹

Reminding the audience of Rosalind/Ganymede's 'true sex' was essential to a successful reception by a nineteenth century audience. 'A knowing Rosalind' or worse still a 'winking Rosalind',⁴² outraged sensibility. Innocence was the key and the sexual disguising needed to be tempered by womanliness; 'to keep the woman's heart ever before the audience, and the woman's love ever patent to all',⁴³ which, in the main, was Neilson's achievement. 'Rosalind is a woman, not a school girl', Kate Terry Gielgud insists,⁴⁴ though this was not always a point she felt Miss Neilson remembered. The Times however, confirms the 'pervading womanliness in her interpretation which in the end captivates all hearts',⁴⁵ as does the Theatre's accolade of her Rosalind as 'a being of infinite loveliness and womanly feeling'.⁴⁶

The following year, the part was played by Miss Ada Rehan under Daly's management at the Grand Theatre, Islington. On the American stage, Daly had produced the play several times,⁴⁷ Miss Rehan taking the part of Rosalind for the first time on 17 December 1889 (Winter, p.265). Whereas Winter feels that with Miss Rehan's Rosalind in America, Daly achieved a 'perfect production' (p.265) for Shaw, Daly's production on the English stage was 'As You Like It just as I don't like it'.⁴⁸ Though confessing Miss Ada Rehan's performance enjoyable, he felt ultimately that



Mrs Langtry's 'nether limbs'

she had 'as yet created nothing but Ada Rehan'.⁴⁹

Shaw aside, Rehan's appeal lay in her naturalness of style, simplicity of costume, and 'essential womanliness of her manner contrasting charmingly with the doublet and hose of her male disguise'.⁵⁰ Her 'boyish bearing' was reported as 'neither hoydenish nor exaggerated',⁵¹ and above all her interpretation was remarkable for its wit and humour. For those familiar with both Neilson's and Rehan's performances, it was felt that an ideal Rosalind would combine Neilson's beauty and Rehan's humour and 'charming genius'.

It is frequently the case that an established company on producing its repertoire, has star players ill-suited to the leading roles, but convention and star status, dictate that they must be played despite the disparity. Such was Max Beerbohm's criticism of the Benson's early twentieth-century production of As You Like It, which opened at the Comedy on 2 March¹⁹⁰¹ and in which he found Mrs Benson as incongruous in the part of Rosalind, as she was in that of Cleopatra :

If only Mr Benson would not persist in grafting the star-system on the stock-system- two things utterly incompatible- his latest production, As You Like It, would be really admirable. Shakespeare wrote some leading parts which Mr Benson can play very well. But Orlando is not one of them. Nor emphatically, is Rosalind a part for Mrs Benson. ⁵²

Though she looked a 'charmingly sweet and youthful' Rosalind, her behaviour demonstrated 'a weak fond woman needing comfort', relying upon Celia to cheer her up. ⁵³ Overall, the Pall Mall Gazette's reviewer rated the production as 'disappointing'; 'a representation of Shakespeare's most delightful play with most of the delight absent'.⁵⁴ The Era's isolated praise, running contrary to general opinion, poses a question mark against Mrs Benson's past performances, if, as it states, 'in the character of Rosalind Mrs Benson scored a greater success than in most of the characters she has essayed during the present series of Shakespearian revivals'.⁵⁵

Max Beerbohm has a more favourable opinion of the later production managed by the Benson's former Duke, Mr Oscar Asche, which opened on 7 October 1907.⁵⁶ On this occasion, Rosalind was played by Miss Lily Brayton, whom Oscar Asche had met in the Benson's company and subsequently married. According to The Times



Ada Rehan's Rosalind

review, she was by far the most boyish Rosalind to date :

Was Shakespeare's Rosalind a romp? Miss Lily Brayton would have us think so, and as she makes an irresistibly charming romp it would have been churlish to insist, for the time being, upon any other view of the character. We do not remember to have seen a Rosalind who went through the game of mock-wooing with greater zest. Certainly there should be a strong leaven of roguishness in Rosalind; but this one is more than a rogue; is in fact, a bit of a minx. 57

Accustomed as audiences were to the womanly heroine, Lily Brayton's foregrounding of the 'saucy lacky' was likely to ruffle a few critical feathers. She seized the opportunity for belying her 'true sex' and delighted in the speech, dress and behaviour of her 'masculine' disguise, making the most of satirizing the lovemaking customs of her own sex and fully justifying Celia's complaint, 'you have simply misused our sex in your love-prate' (IV.1.191). Exploited in this way, Ganymede's commentary on the behaviour of women in their relationships with men, proved a delightful source of ironic humour, comparable to Vesta Tilley's verses about women as 'angels without wings'.

However, criticism of her 'unwomanly' behaviour was severe. The Daily Telegraph complained that the 'hoyden peeped out a little too obviously',⁵⁸ and the Star, though more favourable in its comments, found her 'wanting in delicacy of touch'.⁵⁹ The Westminster Gazette found the 'What shall I do with my doublet and hose?' speech too emphatically uttered by a 'Rosalind not at all embarrassed, in fact, by the display of her legs to Orlando'.⁶⁰ The reviewer deemed her needlessly undignified as the boy', and remained convinced that it was possible to combine the humour of the wooing with 'some reticence and dignity, indicative of the fact that Rosalind was a Princess and brought up at Court'.

Exceptionally, the Daily Chronicle delighted in the performance others were so prudishly condemning :

It was, indeed, refreshing beyond words to see her throwing to the winds all the silly little femininities and oglings and what not that are so mightily in favour with the average Rosalind of the ordinary pastoral play. In her shepherd's dress - which makes only the difference of a little bit more cloak from that of the page's suit in which Rosalind usually masquerades in Arden - in her shepherd's dress, be it said, she frankly tries to look and act just as much like a boy as she possibly



Lily Brayton as Rosalind

can. It was an indisputably right policy, for indeed that was obviously what Rosalind would have done. 61

She was perhaps more at ease in male attire than any of the other actresses cited- encouraged by her own slight, androgynous physique. She was described by one of her contemporaries as, 'a mere slip of a thing, with big blue eyes and golden-brown hair, and with the figure of a thin boy, so thin and flat, indeed that one almost thought she must be consumptive'.⁶² In short, her physique and manner combined to leave the 'woman's heart beneath the doublet',⁶³ rather than pinning it to the outside of her tunic.

The spirit of Shakespeare's Arden was transposed to a contemporary setting in A.W. Pinero's comedy, The Amazons which opened at the Court Theatre in March 1893. In this modern comedy, Lady Castlejordan has failed to produce any male heirs, so she raises her three daughters as young men. These descendants of 'Rosalind and Gautier's girl',⁶⁴ possess all the admirable masculine characteristics, being fine 'sportsmen' and hunters, and so forth, just as their three suitors are 'feminine' in theirs - cowardly, weak and more than a little ridiculous. Gender inversion and disguise is ultimately resolved after much farical play, by each 'girl-boy' being appropriately paired off and returning to the dress of their 'true sex'.

For the actresses, wearing male attire for virtually an entire production, again posed the problems of decency and audience sensibility. As Ellaline Terriss, one of the three 'Rosalinds', writes in her memoirs :

We were terribly self-conscious, for we knew- and we were right - that the sight of us in male attire would scandalize many of the older members of our audiences. The sight of women in real male attire - not Principal Boys and suchlike, of course- was an almost unknown thing then. I can tell you we were nervous. That nervousness began when we assumed our breeches and had to appear before Pinero at the dress rehearsal. We all decided we needed something to give us courage. There was nothing available except a rather old and long-opened bottle of Wincarnis. We each had a glass of that - and it seemed to put some spirit into us. 65

This is a very frank admission to the problems facing the actress. Clearly, the framework of comedy was an insufficient means of countering accusations of indecency.



Photographed by Alfred Ellis, 20, Upper Baker St., N.W.

Copyright.

MISS ELLALINE TERRISS, MISS LILY HANBURY, AND
MISS PATTIE BROWNE,
IN "THE AMAZONS."

"Look here upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of three—brothers (?) "
HAMLET, Act III., Sc. 4 (adapted).

'The Amazons' : Illustration from the Theatre, May 1893

Terriss pinpoints the offence as the 'sight of women in real male attire' which suggests that the contemporary setting and modern male dress of the comedy, brought the action realistically too close for comfort.

The press were quick to reassure the public that, 'the bi-sexual element of the piece - shall I call it androgynism or gynandrisms? - is always diverting and never offensive. Indeed, the maidenly innocence of the girls under their mannish exterior is quite charming. They are three distinct and several Rosalinds'.⁶⁶ The play was widely reviewed by the national papers, and although some felt that the comedy was unworthy of Pinero's pen, many enjoyed the antics in the grounds of 'Arden-Overcote Park'.

The three Amazons were quite differently drawn and it is interesting to note where praise or criticism were forthcoming. Miss Lily Hanbury, endowed with a tall, elegant physique, was lauded for her 'handsome' and 'haughty' Lady Noeline/Noel. Miss Ellaline Terriss, the most pretty, feminine 'boy' of the three, was highly praised for her 'graceful and refined' Willie/Wilhemina - her 'delicacy and refinement' enhanced by her guitar playing and singing. By contrast, the final member of the trio, Tommy/Lady Thomasin, a more robust, sporting type, undertaken by Miss Pattie Browne, an Australian actress, was felt to be a little too 'dapper' or 'raffish' for audience sensibilities. Both The Times⁶⁷ and the Pall Mall Gazette labelled her performance as too much like that of a 'principal boy'.

Victorian and Edwardian audiences clearly, therefore, had different rules of decency for 'high' and 'low' art forms and the cross-dressing comedy actress was bound by more rigorous codes of dress, gesture and speech than her pantomime or music hall counterparts. Though, in a Shakespearean cross-dressing role, the actress is required to disguise her 'true sex', nineteenth-century stage audiences were reluctant to indulge the illusion of an androgynous 'Prince Charming' and insisted on the signification of 'petticoats', even when the costume was that of doublet and hose.

Notes to Chapter 7 : Cross-dressing in the Forest of Arden

1. See Michael Baker, The Rise of the Actor (1978), chapter 5, 'The Position

of the Actress', p.101.

2. Shakespeare on the Stage, second series (New York, London : Benjamin Blom, 1915; reissued, 1969), pp.240-1. (All subsequent references are to this edition.) The statistic might be stretched to 35, if one includes Winter's subsequent addition of American actress Mary Anderson, who acted the part on the British stage, in 1885.
3. 3 December, p.6.
4. The inequality of the Lyceum 'partnership' was felt more forcibly by Ellen in her later career, when there were even fewer mature woman roles to support Irving's continued line of star vehicles.
5. Our Theatre in the Nineties, II, p.114. According to Shaw, this was as true for the presentable actress as Rosalind, as it was for the male equivalent as Hamlet.
6. Daniel Deronda (1967), p.188.
7. She undertook the role for the benefit of Charles Calvert's family at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, 2 October 1879. William Winter cites her first performance of the role, as 18 March 1839, Theatre Royal Covent Garden, under the command of Macready (p.245). However, some discrepancy exists, as The Times records that on this date a performance of a new play, Richelieu : The Conspiracy, was given at Covent Garden, with Macready as Cardinal Richelieu and Miss Helena Faucit as Julie Mortemar. Her performance probably came later in that year as she was to play the part for her end of season benefit.
8. Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters (Edinburgh and London : Blackwood, 1885). Subsequent references are given in the text.
9. Seventh edition (1879), p.264. Hereafter, referenced in the text.
10. Michael Baker (1978) quotes from a public lecture given by Irving in 1878, recorded in the Stage, in which he stated :

There is nothing in all nature purer than a Rosalind or an Imogen, and, if rightly treated, these characters are all the more striking from their appearance in male attire; but the slightest departure from the most modest taste, the faintest shade of the meretricious, not to say indecorous, dressing is fatal (p.101).
11. Theatre, November 1879, p.213.
12. In 1879, Helena Faucit would have been aged 62. Merivale in fact grows sentimental in his description, praising 'those whom the gods love' for never growing old.
13. Theatre, October 1885, pp.221-224.
14. She describes her success on her performance in Dublin where, 'the enthusiasm was unbounded. My appearance as Rosalind made a marked impression, the audience rising en masse from their seats to wave hats and handkerchiefs'. (Theatre, October 1885, p.221.)
15. Our Theatre in the Nineties, II, p.269.
16. The adaptation was designed for performance at the Comédie Française, 12 April 1856. In a preface to the play (published in Paris, by the Librairie Nouvelle, 1856), George Sand claims her translation to be the first. One takes this to mean first in terms of the translation of a single playtext with

performance in mind, as opposed to the translation of the play as part of a collected edition of Shakespeare's work.

17. George Sand defended her changes by stating her own interest in the character of Jacques. She writes in the preface to her translation :

J'avais tendrement aimé ce Jacques, moins vivant et plus poétique que notre misanthrope. J'ai pris la liberté grande de le ramener à l'amour, n'imaginant voir en lui le même personnage qui a fui 'Célimène' pour vivre au fond des forêts, et qui trouve là une 'Célie' digne de guérir sa blessure. C'est là mon roman à moi, dans le roman de Shakespeare, et, en tant que roman, il n'est pas plus invraisemblable que la conversion subite du traître Olivier. (Preface, p.15)

However, these were dangerous grounds for tampering with Shakespeare. As Arsène Houssaye, director of the Comédie Française commented, in, Behind the Scenes of the Comédie Française, translated by Albert Vandam (London : Chapman and Hall, 1889), 'Comme il vous plaira' of George Sand suffered in the first place from too many rehearsals. It did not take long, on the first^{night} to find out that this work à la Shakespeare, was not the work of the great English poet' (p.486). The critics agreed, and not even Mlle Plessy's 'irresistible' Rosalinde, could make up for what Jouvin - typifying the general criticism - described as Sand's idiosyncratic conception of characters, allowed to go off at her own philosophical tangents (Le Figaro, 20 April 1856, p.6).

Therefore, the pruning of Rosalinde's masculine behaviour, is most probably the incidental, result of Sand's personal whim in centring the action around Jacques and Célie, rather than a deliberate act of prudery, which would be an inconceivable act on the part of a woman who generally dressed in a mannish style, in her own, personal life.

18. As You Like It has in fact been performed exclusively by women. Winter (p.340) cites a production on the American stage, New York, 21 November 1894. More recently, the reverse has been true, the National Theatre producing an all male production in 1967, with Ronald Pickup as Rosalind.
19. For production details, see John Stokes, Resistible Theatres (London : Paul Elek, 1972), pp.47-50, and Rodney Shewan, Oscar Wilde : Art and Egotism (London : Macmillan, 1977), pp.79-82.
20. August 1884, p.108.
21. Dramatic Review, 6 June 1885, p.296. As You Like It is used in Gautier's novel as a device to express the complexity of relationships between the triangle of lovers, Rosette (Phebe), d'Albert (Orlando) and the androgynous Théodore, appearing in female costume as Rosalind.
22. Theatre, September 1884, p.158. The September review of the production, sent in by a 'well-informed correspondent' is a more detailed account, than the few notes given in August.
23. In the September review for the Theatre, p.159, it is explained how the costumes reflected the 'realism' policy by being dated between 1470 and 1480, because after this period there were no more independent dukes in France, and how they were designed to be old or new, according to how long a character had spent in the forest.
24. An amusing description is given by a reviewer for the Pall Mall Gazette, 27 August 1897, p.4, of Ada Rehan's open air performance which was to have taken place on 26 August, at Stratford. It describes the energy (and idiocy) involved for the 'city dweller' in having to make his way to Stratford: efforts which were rewarded by a downpour and the adjournment of the open-air performance to the Memorial Theatre.

25. Mrs Patrick Campbell, My Life and Some Letters (1922), p.50. In her memoirs, Mrs Campbell does not date this performance. William Winter quotes 1891 as the year of her Rosalind. However, according to Margot Peters, Mrs Pat (1984), chapter 5, pp.45-57, it is clear that she undertook her first Rosalind with Ben Greet's Woodland Players, at Merton College, Oxford in 1889, and the following summer (1890), played in his company, in the grounds of Lord Pembroke's home, as described in the text.
26. The nineteenth-century interest in open-air productions of As You Like It is reflected in another theatrical novel, C.A.E. Ranger Gull's Back to Lilac Land (1901). Towards the close of the novel, an open air performance of As You Like It is staged at the fête in the vicarage gardens of provincial Troon, upon which occasion the hero reflects unhappily on his wayward actress-wife, who herself 'had once wandered through the forest a glorious boy' (p.297). The tension and unease between the aristocratic audience and company of itinerant actors gathered together for the occasion, echoes the dislocation between performers and audience that Mrs Campbell describes on the occasion of the outdoor performance given for Lord Pembroke at Wilton, particularly as two members of the aristocracy disguised themselves as performers. Whilst their impersonations deceived and entertained their friends, for the company their humour was patronizing and a little cruel.
27. See Winter, p.241.
28. Theatre, October 1885, pp.175-182.
29. Shaw, II, p.114.
30. Ibid., p.270.
31. 5 December 1896, p.615.
32. 3 December 1896, p.1.
33. Speaker, 5 December 1896, p.615.
34. 3 December 1896, p.1.
35. Kate Terry Gielgud, The Victorian Playgoer (1980), p.46.
36. The Pall Mall Gazette, 3 December 1896, p.3, admitted to being pleasantly surprised by her Rosalind, as her acting to date had shown little promise; her last part, in the Prisoner of Zenda, being a total failure.
37. Ibid.
38. Daily Chronicle, 3 December 1896, p.3.
39. Mrs Patrick Campbell (1922), p.336. Shaw's appreciation of Stella's performance as George Sand, was one of the few indications that her 'impersonation' was taken seriously. On the whole it 'was dismissed as "Mrs Patrick Campbell in breeches", while others laughed at the trousers and wondered how George's "trick cigar" was made to puff real smoke - innocence that made the veteran smile'. (Margot Peters (1984), p.367)
40. The Times, 3 December 1896, p.6. Mrs Jordan first played the part of Rosalind at the age of 25 at Drury Lane, 13 April 1787 (See Winter, p.238). Mrs Langtry toured the provinces in the part in 1882 (See the Theatre, July 1882, p.61).
41. This is evident in the following description of Mary Anderson's Rosalind, by William Archer, in the Theatre, October 1885 :

Her appearance was ideal. No actress whom I have seen in Rosalind, or indeed in any 'doublet and hose' part, wears these trying garments with anything like the ease, grace, and perfect good taste, displayed by Miss Anderson. In most Rosalinds the woman obtrudes herself upon the physical as well as the mental eye...A cleverly- designed costume, modest without prudery, combined with her lithe, well-knit and in no way redundant figure to make her a perfect embodiment of the 'saucy lackey'...Her claret-coloured mantle, exquisitely handled, gave her the means for much significant by-play through which she prevented the audience from forgetting her sex, without in anyway suggesting it to Orlando. Its tastefulness was perhaps the great charm of her Rosalind. (p.181)

42. Daily Telegraph, 3 December 1896, p.5.
43. Kate Terry Gielgud, p.46.
44. Ibid.
45. 3 December 1896, p.6.
46. January 1897, p.37.
47. Winter dates Daly's first season as a theatrical manager in America as 16 August 1869, to 9 July 1870, during which time he produced 25 plays including As You Like It (Winter, p.260).
48. Shaw, III, p.208.
49. Ibid., p.210.
50. The Times, 5 October 1897, p.4.
51. Pall Mall Gazette review of her performance in August 1897 at Stratford; 27 August 1897, p.4.
52. Around Theatres (1953), pp.134-5.
53. Pall Mall Gazette, 28 February 1901, p.2.
54. Ibid.
55. 2 March 1901, p.12 .
56. Around Theatres, pp.477-480.
57. 8 October 1907, p.6.
58. 8 October 1907, p.12.
59. 8 October 1907, p.1.
60. 8 October 1907, p.3.
61. 8 October 1907, p.6. Wearing a shepherd's outfit for the cross-dressing scenes, was an issue raised by the Pall Mall Gazette, 30 September 1907, on the revival of the production, and textual evidence was quoted to support the deviation from the usual 'martial outside' :

Re-reading the play, it would seem that chapter and verse might be quoted to justify the innovation. After Rosalind has bargained with Corin (II.4.) for his master's 'cote, his flocks, and bounds of feed' and presumably bought them, it is quite legitimate to supposed that she would try to look the part. Moreover in the end (V.4.) the Duke remarks suddenly :-

'I do remember in this shepherd boy
Some lively touches of my daughter's favour'.

He could hardly have been a shepherd boy under a swashing martial outside. (p.1)

62. From the Wings, edited by Elizabeth Fagan (London : Collins, 1922), p.60.
A description of Lily in her first part is also cited, which underlines her androgynous physique:

Her first part - she went on as an understudy - was the little Prince of Wales in Richard III. Tall as she was, in a black velvet suit and a flaxen wig, she looked nevertheless a lovely boy-child. (pp.63-4)

63. Pall Mall Gazette, 8 October 1907, p.4.
64. Pall Mall Gazette, 8 March 1893, p.3.
65. Just a Little Bit of String (London : Hutchinson, 1955), p.79.
66. Star, 8 March 1893, p.2.
67. 8 March 1893, p.10.

Chapter 8 : Princess of Denmark

Whereas the Victorians and Edwardians were so 'shocked' by the young 'ladies' in tights who appeared on stage, French audiences had an entirely different perspective. Dramatic convention in France had established the concept of the travesti role in the eighteenth century, which had become popular in the nineteenth and did not shock or offend in the way the English breeches role did. As May Agate writes in her reflections on Sarah Bernhardt and the French theatre,

Now it has always seemed somewhat incongruous to the English mind that women should play male rôles, but no such prejudice exists in France. From Beaumarchais's Chérubin onwards, adolescent manhood has been represented on the French stage by women players, and it must be understood that le travesti, as they call it, has not been merely permissible but customary. 1

As an early nineteenth-century, French, Madame Vestris, Virginie Déjazet was the chief exponent of the tradition, leading a highly successful vaudeville career at the Palais Royal in the 1830's and opening her own theatre in 1859. She played such great French men as Rousseau, Voltaire and Napoleon, and at 62, played the male lead in Sardou's Monsieur Garat.²

Just as Déjazet's career was coming to a close, Sarah Bernhardt was tasting her first success in the highly acclaimed travesti role, Zanetto, in a one act play, Le passant by François Coppée. Bernhardt was to play several such roles during her career, the most important of which, in terms of this study, was her Hamlet which she brought to London in the summer of 1899. Hamlet is one of her three major travesti roles, the other two being her male impersonations in Rostand's L'Aiglon and Musset's Lorenzaccio. She, herself, called them the three Hamlets, 'le noir Hamlet de Shakespeare, l'Hamlet blanc de Rostand, l'Aiglon, et l'Hamlet florentin d'Alfred de Musset, Lorenzaccio'.³ What is interesting is the way in which her Hamlet was received by London audiences who found the idea of a woman playing a man's role 'unnatural', compared to her native successes, where the travesti convention was accepted and acceptable. As this final chapter on the 'third sex' moves into serious drama and tragedy, it also provides a contrast with the previous study of

actresses in comedy cross-dressing roles.

In the case of Rosalind, male guise was assumed as part of the plot mechanism and her 'true sex' resumed by the end of the play's action. In the travesti roles which Bernhardt undertook, sexual disguise was not a plot issue; she was actually playing a man's role. This was a hallmark of the French travesti role, which accepted women playing men's roles and men playing women's roles. Bernhardt put forward two interesting arguments reasoning both the kind of male parts suitable for women to play and why in fact they might be more successfully played by women than men. Her arguments amount to a justification of the 'third sex'. Firstly, she states that 'une femme ne peut interpréter un rôle d'homme que lorsque celui-ci est un cerveau dans un corps débile', and as examples of parts women cannot play, cites Napoleon, Don Juan and Romeo.⁴ What lies behind this assertion is the notion that women are suited to the androgynous, asexual roles, but not to those which connote manliness and virility. Romeo is perhaps an odd choice, for the sexual coupling in Romeo and Juliet is secondary to the signification of spiritual 'Romance' at its most tragic height,⁵ and in this respect, bears family resemblance to the 'third sex'.

As to why women are actually better suited than men to such androgynous, adolescent roles, is explained by Bernhardt in an article for the American magazine, Harper's Bazar, where she states :

There is one important reason why I think a woman is better adapted to play parts like L'Aiglon and Hamlet than a man. These rôles portray youths of twenty or twenty one, with the minds of men of forty. A boy of twenty cannot understand the philosophy of Hamlet, nor the poetic enthusiasm of L'Aiglon, and without understanding there is no delineation of character. There are no young men of that age capable of playing these parts, consequently an older man essays the rôle. He does not look the boy, nor has he the ready adaptability of the woman, who can combine the light carriage of youth with the mature thought of the man. The woman more readily looks the part and yet has the maturity of mind to grasp it.⁶

What Bernhardt describes is a kind of thinking Peter Pan; maturity of thought, combined with physical asexuality, which is characteristic of her Hamlet types.

In a franker mood, Bernhardt might have admitted that an additional major reason for undertaking the male roles was the difficulty the aging actress faced

in finding suitable parts. She cites the paucity of roles for women, but does not point out, that as the actress matured, the travesti role at least widened her repertoire, for it was not one which relied on a display of traditional female beauty.

Gerda Taranow's research, for instance, indicates that the number of travesti roles played by Bernhardt in the last 27 years of her career, was double the number played in the first 32 (p.211).

Bernhardt's early travesti role in François Coppée's Le passant, at the Odéon, 14 January 1869, was a simple tableau of the androgyne image,^{in short,} a conventional, travesti adolescent. Playing opposite Mlle Agar, as the seductress Silvia, Bernhardt was the innocent, child-like, wandering minstrel. Costumed in a floral jerkin and tights, her head crowned with a blond wavy wig and feathered hat, she passes by the seductress; the Peter Pan-like youth and innocence, untroubled by physical passions. With reference to Bernhardt's overnight success in the role, applauded by the students of the 'left bank', May Agate writes,

She was made for le travesti, with her slight build and lyrical genius; for mark you, it is only the poets and dreamers that fall into the category which the term travesti covers. It implies a certain sexlessness - an almost Pierrot-like quality. Madame Sarah, so ultra feminine in the rôles which demanded charm and what is often in these more outspoken days, crudely termed "sex appeal", could, when it was required of her, divest herself completely of the glamour and feline grace which she possessed in such abundance and give something which I believe to be on a much higher plane - that of the mind. 7

The asexuality of the role is dominant; it is not concerned with a female becoming a male, but with the suspension of gender definition and physical passions, in a negation of the sexes and preoccupation with 'mental' passions.

The majority of critics shared May Agate's view of Bernhardt's androgynous qualities and were enthusiastic about her performance. Jouvin praised her travesti for its 'youth' and 'poetry',⁸ and Pierre Wolff enthused over the emotion she instilled into Coppée's verse.⁹ Sarcey, however, felt that her physique was unsuited to male attire.¹⁰ In fact, throughout her travesti career, though her talent and acting skills were appreciated, the success of her androgynous image, did not compare with the magnetism of her 'sex-appeal' in her major female roles. Bernhardt argued that the 'feminine charm' or 'magnetism' of the woman's role were not parted with



Le passant

in the man's, but transformed into an equivalent 'masculine charm and magnetism'.¹¹

Critical response however, did not always substantiate her theory. Neither did Bernhardt always practice what she preached. Her claim to accuracy and detail in her male impersonations, and the suppression of feminine guile, is somewhat undermined by this report from the Pall Mall Gazette, on the delay in the production of Rostand's L'Aiglon, attributed to a dispute between actress and playwright on the subject of costume :

The point on which they disagree is whether the trousers of the Duc de Reichstadt's uniform are to be white or blue. M. Rostand, who is a stickler for historical accuracy, would have them blue, as they were in reality at the period dealt with in the play. Mme Sarah Bernhardt, for aesthetic and feminine reasons, is in favour of white, the colour in vogue in the Austrian army under the Empire, but abandoned later on. 12

Female charm was therefore not altogether a consideration banished from her male impersonations.

Her role as Zanetto was, like Beaumarchais's Chéubin, which she also played, a conventional, ingénu-travesti role, and not until her interpretation of Musset's Lorenzaccio at the Théâtre Renaissance in 1896, did she attempt a more complex undertaking. Her theory of an old head on young shoulders was put into practice in her adapted version of Lorenzaccio that unsuccessfully turned Musset's study in tyranny, into 'Boulevard melodrama', and transformed the prince, ultimately defeated by the corrupt Medici power he sets out to destroy, into the sensationalized role of 'avenging liberator' (Taranow, p.217). In this portrait of a prince's struggle to avenge his 'mère égorgée', that is to say his country, Bernhardt claimed to find, 'une telle variété de sentiments, une telle puissance évocatrice', the range of which she could not find in any female character.¹³ The role of 'avenging liberator' might have appealed to sensationalist audience sympathies, but it did not hoodwink the critics, who did not agree with her conception of Lorenzaccio and the betrayal of Musset's original intention, though they conceded that the merits of the production lay in her performance and some paid high tribute to her art of travesti. Several, such as Henri Fouquier, in le Figaro¹⁴ or Duquesnel in Le Gaulois,¹⁵ confessed to losing sight of the travesti and seeing only the Florentine prince :

Dès sa première entrée en scène, l'effet est saisissant. Cet être pâle, maladif, ce corps d'éphèbe à demi-corbé, ce visage, glabre, rongé de débauche, éclairé par des yeux inquiets, cette voix dont les notes sont tantôt trainantes, tantôt câline, tantôt stridentes, selon l'expression à rendre, tout cela est d'une vérité terrifiante.¹⁶

Sarcey was more discriminating, distinguishing between those moments, such as the assassination of the duke, which, though effective, relied on conscious artistry, and her genuine spell-binding moments, in which she captivated her audience by 'un frémissement de volupté qui avait un je ne sais quoi de religieux', and earned her the right to be ranked amongst the 'greats'.¹⁷

Undaunted by her 'Florentine Hamlet', Bernhardt launched her Shakespearean Hamlet on her Parisian public, who sat through the five hour production in May 1899, and then, the following month, presented it before the London public, curious and concerned to see what she would do to their Danish prince.

The Parisian press was not over enthusiastic about the May production, but bravely defended their great actress by commenting on edited highlights which they felt to be successful. Duquesnel singled out the play scene, the speeches in the cemetery and the final duel;¹⁸ Fouquier remarked on the scenes with Ophélie.¹⁹ Unfortunately, Sarcey did not live to see Bernhardt's travesti, dying a few days before the performance, though the sensationalism and theatrical stagecraft of the star-orientated production, may well have had him turning in his grave. Reviewing in his place, Gustave Larroumet, put on a brave face and suggested that the good qualities of the production far outnumbered the faults. To add weight to his arguments, he cited the number of English spectators present, including the editor of The Times and reported the favourability of their reaction.²⁰

However, whatever Larroumet's views on the English spectators in Paris, audiences and critics who saw the June production in London, were not impressed. When the play opened, in the translation faithfully executed by Eugène Morand and Marcel Schwob, it was still rather a long production and one gallery spectator echoed the sentiments of the audience, as he was heard to whistle, 'We won't go home till morning' during the last entr'acte.²¹

The hostility of the English press was inspired both by Bernhardt's unconventional

interpretation of the part and by the idea of a woman (and moreover a French woman), playing Shakespeare's melancholy prince.²² She was not the first French actress to do so. Mme Judith had played the part in 1867. Neither were English audiences completely unaccustomed to female Hamlets. There had been female Hamlets since Mrs Siddons, who has the dubious honour of being the first in a line which includes, Mrs Inchbald (1780), Mrs Powell (1796), Julia Glover (1821) and Alice Marriott (1861).²³ Later, in the 1890's Mrs Bandmann-Palmer played the part frequently in the provinces,²⁴ and in 1899, Bernhardt was rivalling the Hamlet of Clara Howard (Mrs George Daventry), played as melodrama, in the Mile End Road.²⁵

The Daily Telegraph opened its review with comparative comments on one of the earlier English female Hamlets and Bernhardt's current attempt. Miss Alice Marriott's Hamlet, the reviewer noted, had been remarkable for the voice but not for the figure. Her ample proportions, 'opposed the popular idea of what the Prince should be', and her performance was remarkable wholly for its 'flattering exhibition of pure elocutionary methods'.²⁶ By contrast, Bernhardt's slighter figure suited the part as, 'it is the wispy, willowy Hamlet who best conforms to our predilections'. The review echoed Bernhardt's theory of youthful looks and maturity of interpretation, noting that in general, Hamlets had either one or the other, and that it was rare to find a combination of the two.

Bernhardt was adamant that a successful male impersonation depended on the audience believing the actress to 'actually be the boy' and not to sit in judgement on how well she played the part.²⁷ To this end, she placed great emphasis on the actress's build and the importance of not being fat. However, although the Daily Telegraph was impressed by the suitability of her figure, others were less satisfied. The Era, both thoroughly disappointed and outraged by her attempt, saw too much of Bernhardt's 'true sex' in her Hamlet :

As a Male Impersonator, Mme Bernhardt is a dire failure. Indeed, to say otherwise would be to cruelly fault her. For it is only the unsexed woman, the woman, who, physically and physiologically, approaches to the masculine - the monstrosity in short - that can deceive us as to her gender on the stage. 28

Finding her 'distinctly feminine', the review continued, her attempted masculinity



Above, Alice Marriott as Hamlet. Below, Sarah Bernhardt's Hamlet.



such as cocking her legs up on a couch, her 'manly stride' or 'gruff growlings' resulted in a portrait of an 'angry elderly woman' (Bernhardt was already in her fifties), not a 'young and emotional man'. It failed because the illusion had been absent from the beginning and the reviewer was finally driven to quote Johnson's homily on the dancing dog (that could not dance well, though it was a wonder it could dance at all). The review reveals a startling prejudicial attitude towards women playing men's roles, and a highly conservative view of the image of women. If a woman is not beautiful and feminine, then she is considered an aberration of her 'true sex'.

As the reviewer states that boy parts may be played by women because the sexes are not so distinct, it is clear that Hamlet was not bracketed in this category. The French public had simply decoded Bernhardt's later 'Hamlet types', as more complex versions of her earlier, conventional travesti parts, based on the youthful, asexual image, but for the English, Hamlet belonged to a more 'manly' tradition than a woman in the role could signify, unless that woman was 'phenomenally masculine', and hence a freak.

The Westminster Gazette was also adamant that women should not play men's parts in drama,²⁹ and American actress Elizabeth Robins, assessing her fellow actress's performance, states that she 'had no idea that I was about to be convinced that women cannot "do" men's parts'.³⁰ Her reflections on the role, reveal that she felt Bernhardt fell very short of actually being the boy :

However well she does it (and I do not believe it could be better done than in the instance under consideration), there is no moment in the drama when the spectator is not fully and calmly conscious that the hero is a woman masquerading, or is jarred into sharp realization of the fact by her doing something that is very like a man...Madame Bernhardt's assumption of masculinity is so cleverly carried out that one loses sight of Hamlet in one's admiration of the tour de force of the actress. This is not to say that she gives us a man, but rather Sarah Bernhardt playing, with amazing skill, a spirited boy; doing it with an impetuosity, a youthfulness, almost childish. ³¹

Again the assessment of Bernhardt's endeavours is underlined by the notion of Hamlet as a man and not as an adolescent and the scenes with Ophelia are consequently cited by Robins, as being particularly problematic. The English and American conception

of Hamlet does not therefore correspond to Bernhardt's notion of a strong mind and feeble body; the English are prepared to credit the Danish prince with a far greater virility.

Beerbohm, who opened his review with, 'I cannot, on my heart, take Sarah's Hamlet seriously',³² expands on this view. He assumes that Sarah's reason for essaying the part rests on her understanding of Hamlet's 'gentleness' and his 'lack of executive ability', as distinctly 'feminine qualities', but her reasoning thereby failed to recognize that, 'Hamlet is none the less a man because he is not consistently manly, just as Lady Macbeth is none the less a woman for being a trifle unsexed...Sarah ought not to have supposed that Hamlet's weakness set him in any possible relation to her own feminine mind and body'.³³ Sarah, on the other hand, conceived Hamlet as an 'unsexed being', who 'must be divested of all virility', in order to reveal the anguish of the soul which 'frets the body'.³⁴ In other words, a healthy, masculine, and virile torso, was not, according to Sarah, an apt external signifier of Hamlet's inner torment.

American critic, John Hansen, felt it unlikely that English audiences could possibly comprehend the French Hamlet, as different to Shakespeare's as Paris was different to London. More generous in his praise than several of the English critics, Hansen found her physique sufficiently sexless for the role, but facially too feminine:

Physically Bernhardt's unusual lines of figure proved of assistance in rendering her impersonation sexless if not altogether masculine. Even now, with a contour rounded out considerably since the days when the supreme dramatic genius of our times was better known to the American public, Bernhardt, costumed in the traditional sables of the Dane, does not belie the part by a strong suggestion of femininity except facially; there she comes up against a stumbling block - that elderly, unique face, haunting at any time, becomes a nightmare, a spectre in opposition to her faithful simulation of a youth's body. 35

Photographs support Hansen's description, Bernhardt's Hamlet being a much fuller figure than her slight Zanetto. 'Willowy' is perhaps an exaggerated, over-flattering adjective for an actress suffering the mature actress's fate of a widening girth. Kate Terry Gielgud wondered whether she had cultivated 'so stolid an appearance', in an attempt to be masculine. She gives a full and very unflattering costume description :

She handicapped herself from the start with her clothes. Her legs are not shapely, but she wore the traditional black tights, over which hung a short doublet, with the most unbecoming sleeves ever invented, a huge puff falling below the elbow producing an effect of enormous width from neck to waist and making her look as if her arms were glued to her sides. A white under-dress of elaborate make was worn, muffling her up to the chin, and she trailed, not a cloak, but a long, wide scarf over one shoulder, which got in her way and was not picturesque. 36

Some reviewers thought that the tights might, after the pantomime fashion, draw in the crowds, and not everyone found her as unbecoming as Kate Terry Gielgud did, or Beerbohm, who would have preferred her 'sable doublet and hose' to have been confiscated by the customs officials at Charing Cross.

One of the features not commented on by Kate Terry Gielgud, is her blond wig worn for the part. In this she emulated, whether by accident or design, the Hamlet of Charles Fechter, a Frenchman who performed Hamlet in English and was noted for playing the part in a 'fair wig, a cross between golden and ginger' 37 on the grounds that it represented the Prince's Scandinavian origin and colouring. A more likely source of inspiration for her coiffeur, which at least one reviewer found 'a little "too wiggy"', 38 was the model of the young Raphael. The affinity between youthful sketches of the cleanshaven, wavy-haired painter and Bernhardt's page-boy curls, is quite striking, and perhaps even more evident in her earlier portrait of the Renaissance Zanetto. 39

If physique leant itself to 'sexlessness' or androgyny, the voice, as Vesta Tilley found, was guaranteed to break the illusion. In speculation on Bernhardt's aspirations of masculinity, Kate Terry Gielgud also noted that Bernhardt had switched to a 'monotonous and harsh' key. Several reviewers lamented the absence of the 'golden voice' and complained of the lack of modulation. The Westminster Gazette indicated that there was nothing between a 'whisper' and a 'shout', 40 and J.T. Grein complained :

this Hamlet knows no decorum or moderation. He either rushes through a stream of words in almost inaudible accents, or he hurls the words at his bystanders in frantic howls. Yes, he howls, for the gold of the once beautiful voice has become so intimately alloyed with baser metal, that it has almost disappeared. Now the voice is harsh, the tiger-like accents of the fourth act of 'Feodora' are there, but gone are the organ tones of Marguerite fondling her Armand. 41



Above, sketch of Bernhardt's Hamlet. Below, portrait of the young Raphael.



If the harshness was an attempted stab at vocal masculinity, then clearly Bernhardt's London public would have much rather she stuck to her golden tones, whatever the distraction from the illusion of maleness.

However, Bernhardt's Dutch companion, Suze Rueff, attributes the harsh registers to her dogged enemy, stage-fright, from which, she claims, there was no doubt Bernhardt suffered on her opening night in London. While stage-fright 'somewhat marred, the beauty of her voice', Rueff claimed, it brought into play, 'that perfect technique, the result of long years of assiduous training, which enabled her to muster forth a semblance of self-assurance that in reality she was far from experiencing'.⁴² Rueff notes that one critic at least commented on her 'self possession' (this was in fact Beerbohm) and one of the more positive points that Elizabeth Robins made about her performance, was the presence of gestural control :

her wonderful mastery of sheer poise; that power she has of standing stock still for an indefinite length of time with perfect ease and grace, never shifting her ground, and equally never ceasing for a moment to be dramatic. It was when she stood so, her feet firmly planted, making only occasional use of sparing, clean-cut gesture, that she came nearest, I should say, to the effect that the artist in her wanted to produce. ⁴³

Recognition of the traits which characterize an artiste's style may be viewed in two ways; either as distinctive gifts which will compound to form 'original insight' and 'individualism', and re-create the role anew in an 'unparalleled' fashion,⁴⁴ or, as traits which are nothing but signifiers of the star personality. The majority of reviews suggested Bernhardt's performance demonstrated the latter, feeling she created nothing but herself; was more Bernhardt than Hamlet, and simply used the technique of male impersonation as an attention seeking device :

For what, after all, is the exploit but one more appeal to the gaping crowd, the thoughtless wonder-seekers who go to the theatre, not to admire a grand impersonation, but to see Sarah Bernhardt in tights, trying to do the impossible in an attempt to delight the unreflecting? "Clever" it undoubtedly is, but so are all Madame Bernhardt's methods of attracting attention. ⁴⁵

For some, there was more self-advertisement than 'Art' in her male impersonation; more of the eccentric 'super star' than a Shakespearean Hamlet.

To be fair to Bernhardt, the English critics might have expressed more favourable views, if they had been able to conquer their own prejudicial conception of the melancholy prince. John Hansen, as an American observer, suggested that it was a question of misunderstood sign-systems :

Few outside of France understand the French smile or French philosophy, and certainly one could hardly expect a Londoner to comprehend a Hamlet brooding over the why and wherefore of creation unless he punctuated his reflections with lugubrious tears and sighs. 46

Hence, Bernhardt's prince who concealed his heartache by the smile on his lips, was likely to be 'read' as wanting in 'proper philosophical melancholy'. This was the crux of English criticism which expressed the view that the impetuous, spirited youth was a travesty of the melancholy prince. Purists reminded her that this was Shakespeare, not Sardou.⁴⁷ Her Dane, 'an unmannerly youth; undignified, disrespectful, moody and short tempered', was surely not Shakespeare's?⁴⁸ An enlightened few, found her conception of the character refreshing, like Clement Scott,⁴⁹ or The Times which welcomed her 'vigour and interest' and her 'pleasant, humorous, very gay prince, who in happier circumstances would have been the life and soul of the Court'.⁵⁰

If the overall conception offended, there were at least moments of stage business which were generally recognized as original and imaginative, notably the 'buzz buzz' scenes with Polonius which Bernhardt turned into a make-believe game of fly-catching, the play scene and her thrusting of a torch into the face of the guilty uncle,⁵¹ or the tableau of Hamlet demonstrating filial affection, by kissing the streaming hair of his dying mother. Stimulating moments of original stage-craft, perhaps, but Bernhardt's showmanship was not enough to convince the English critics of the merits of her male impersonation.

Neither Bernhardt's Hamlet nor her Lorenzaccio were great box office draws, either in England or France,⁵² unlike her travesti role in Rostand's L'Aiglon, her 'white Hamlet', which opened the following year, 15 March 1900, at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt. Rostand's six act verse play, based on the short life of Napoleon's son, is excruciating to read and hard to imagine as a box office winner. Critical



'L'Aiglon'

opinion deplored Rostand's 'jungle thicket' of verse, formless structure, and lack of development in his principal character.⁵³ Nevertheless the play was a huge success, due to Rostand's choice of interpreter (he had in fact written the play with Bernhardt in mind) and the play's intense evocation of nationalism. Coming after the divisions of the Dreyfus affair and coinciding with the Exposition Universelle, it was, as Ernest Pronier, describes, a significant theatrical event, in terms of the patriotism which it inspired :

C'est le 15 mars 1900 que L'Aiglon devait prendre son vol. Cette date est aussi mémorable que celle d'Hernani ou La fille de Roland. C'est que la France venait de passer par une crise douloureuse, lors de l'Affaire, et le sentiment national avait été durement éprouvé, l'armée atteinte dans son prestige. Le poème dramatique de Rostand n'est que l'exaltation des valeurs nationales. Aussi craignait-on des manifestations hostiles. Mais la magie du poète, et de ses interprètes - Sarah et Guitry - avaient su communiquer leur flamme jusqu'au moindre figurant, conquis l'auditoire. Ce soir-là tous communiquèrent dans l'amour retrouvé de la patrie.⁵⁴

Napoleonic fervour set to alexandrine verse was hardly likely to appeal to an English audience, and it did not make a favourable impression on London when it was performed there in 1901. Suze Rueff contrasts the English and French audience responses :

It must have been a gruelling experience for Londoners to have to sit through six acts of Alexandrines, spoken in a foreign language; enough to damp every vestige of enthusiasm! In Paris, with advantage of their mother-tongue to which was added the sentimental interest, the tense house responded to each significant line, if not by applause, then by delighted nods and expressions of rapture.⁵⁵

Bernhardt drew her own parallels between Hamlet and the 'duc de Reichstadt', as sons outraged 'par une mère indigne'.⁵⁶ 'L'Aiglon', like Hamlet, is stuck in a world in which he cannot 'act', subject to the constraints of the Austrian court, and is haunted, not by an assassinated father, but one whom the world would have him believe did not exist. Whereas the English had strongly objected to the idea of a non-virile Hamlet, her conception of a 'corps débile' and tortured mind, applied more readily to the consumptive 'L'Aiglon', whose feverish contemplations on his own inadequacies result in premature death.

Playing the role at the age of 56, again gave rise to speculation on how

convincing an adolescent an elderly lady would make :

How was it the world accepted her as the personification of that frail, childlike figure? She was tall and she was getting stoutish - she could not look the part in the very least. But with her short curly hair and white uniform, brandishing a sword, there she was, more boy-like than any juvenile. Somehow it was the "Fairy Prince" unreality of it that made it seem so very real. 57

Where the boyish tones and youthful insolence had failed in Hamlet, they succeeded in L'Aiglon and she sustained the illusion of the part from the early scenes as the 'eaglet' plays with his army of toy soldiers, painted in the outlawed colours of Napoleon's guards, to the final death scene, acted with tremendous pathos in the presence of the 'feather-brained mother'. It required, as Fouquier stated, playing 'toute la gamme de sentiments humains' 58 and ^{he} acknowledged, as did many others, her unique talent and energy, in being able to carry off such ^a difficult, demanding and extremely taxing role. 59 From accounts of her performance, one senses that she had complete control over her audience's emotional response; that her exhilarating verse deliveries, her individual touches, such as the notes of filial devotion, or the pathos of the death scene, and the pervasive spirit of patriotism, captivated and thrilled her spectators. They no longer sat in judgement upon a woman playing a man's role, but were carried away by the spell-binding magic of their great French actress, conjuring up the Napoleonic ghost. 60

The success of her illusion may be judged by Bernhardt's anecdote, retold by May Agate (p.124) of the young girl who fell in love with the image of 'L'Aiglon'. Like Tilley's female admirers who fell in love with her mashers, this young girl refused her suitors because none looked like the young Napoleon, and Bernhardt, like Tilley, was forced to resort to revealing her unmade-up self, in order to convince the girl of her mistake, whereupon she went out and married the first eligible male.

Having established 'L'Aiglon' as a travesti role, the success of the production demanded that in subsequent revivals it be played in this tradition. Bernhardt's own attempts, towards the close of her life, to establish a young actor in the part, did not catch on, and the role reverted to the travesti tradition, on her death. 61

Without wishing to deprive Sarah of her triumph, it cannot be denied that

the success of her 'French Hamlet' rested largely on patriotic appeal. More limited in magnetism, scope and popularity, was her travesti performance in Maeterlinck's Pelléas et Mélisande in July 1904. The production took place as part of her London summer season and attracted attention because it brought together the talents of Bernhardt and Mrs Patrick Campbell.

Mrs Patrick Campbell had already demonstrated her beauty and talent in the part of Mélisande, in the 1898 production at the Prince of Wales Theatre, with Mr Forbes Robertson and Mr Martin Harvey.⁶² Bernhardt had taken a box at the first matinée and had been able to see Mrs Pat's Mélisande for herself.⁶³ However, playing opposite Bernhardt's Pelléas, entailed the added difficulty for Mrs Patrick Campbell, of speaking the part in French. Though familiar with the language and the French text, she had some difficulty with her pronunciation,⁶⁴ but Bernhardt felt that this would simply serve to enhance the 'dream-like' quality of Maeterlinck's play.⁶⁵

Because of the play's fantasy setting and treatment of the eternal triangle theme, transposed to a landscape of the imagination, the role of Pelléas was appropriate for male impersonation. Pelléas is the mythological white knight; the desirable 'prince of love', destined to fail in the quest for his love object, kept from him by greater, intangible and unseen, eternal, tragic forces. There are few indications of physical passion, which would detract from the image of asexual adolescent charm; love simply hangs in unfinished sentences and pregnant pauses.

For the production, Mrs Pat wore the shimmering gold dress (nicknamed the 'gold umbrella case'), designed by Burne Jones, which she wore in the original 1898 performance and with her long tresses of hair, the overall effect was that of the fairy tale princess.⁶⁶ Sarah wore a surcoat of chain-mail designed by Graham Robertson.⁶⁷ With her tunic, tights and page-boy curls, she again emulated^a the model of the young Raphael. That this adolescent youth was now in reality a woman of sixty, and his princess a comparably aging actress, caused at least one critic to say they were old enough to know better,⁶⁸ and another admirer, Max Beerbohm, to stay away :

I love the play too well, and am loth that my memory of it as performed by Mrs



Pelléas and Mélisande

Campbell in her own language, with Mr Martin Harvey as Pelléas, should be complicated with any memory less pleasing. I am quite willing to assume that Mrs Campbell speaks French as exquisitely as she speaks English, and that Sarah's Pelléas is not, like her Hamlet and her Duc de Reichstadt, merely ladylike. But the two facts remain that Sarah is a woman and that Mrs Campbell is an Englishwoman. And by these two facts, such a performance is ruled out of the sphere of art into the sphere of sensationalism. If Maeterlinck were a sensationalist, that would not matter.⁶⁹

Beerbohm's reluctance deprived him of a performance which others attended with varying degrees of enthusiasm, attracted by the novelty of the partnership which managed (aside from the occasional tricks played on each other)⁷⁰ to survive the widely different, clashing personalities of the serious Sarah and playful Mrs Pat. Maeterlinck's 'dream play' was thought by many to be rather insubstantial, and the role of Pelléas not sufficiently testing for Sarah's powers; 'she simply smiled and warbled and languished through it. What else could she do?'⁷¹ In her memoirs, Mrs Patrick Campbell prefers to recall critical opinion by citation from the more favourable review by W.L. Courtney in the Daily Telegraph, and her own description of Sarah, pinpoints the 'ecstasy and breeding' signified by her carriage, and the 'voice of a youthful melancholy spirit, gradually melting into a tenderness, that more than once almost rendered me speechless for fear of breaking the spell'.⁷²

Instead of being quick to criticize^{ci} the inadequacies of the travesti role or the aging actress as youthful male, critics might have given more consideration to the choices Bernhardt faced. An aging actress could no longer play young heroines, and there were, as previously stated, few decent parts for the mature woman. The French dramatic convention therefore presented Bernhardt with the opportunity of increasing her range and deploying her talents in new ventures, when many actresses either gracefully accepted defeat, either by taking a back seat in minor roles, or by getting married and leaving the stage altogether.

It is to Sarah's credit, that towards the end of her life and career, in spite of ill health and her physical disability, she was still able to add another male impersonation to her repertoire. For, in the November of 1920 she appeared in Louis Verneuil's Daniel 'as a noble-hearted gentleman aged about thirty',⁷³ and even found the energy to perform the role for a fortnight in London the following April.



Pelléas et Mélisande, Act III

That English audiences and critics were so anti her travesti efforts is only partly a reflection on Sarah's talent and ability, but is more wholly an expression of their prejudicial attitude towards women and cross-dressing. The French, accustomed to the convention of travesti were more open minded. However, the fact that many of Bernhardt's travesti roles were either polite successes or even failures,⁷⁴ signifies that her native audiences preferred the magnetism of their actress in petticoats to her male guises; expressed a preference for her 'true sex' over her attempted, androgynous, representations of the 'third sex'.

Notes to Chapter 8 : Princess of Denmark

1. Madame Sarah (London : Home and Van Thal, 1945), p.158.
2. Virginie Déjazet also performed male roles in England. Michael Baker (1978) records Fanny Kemble's outrage at seeing her perform, condemning her as worse than a dancer, because her limbs were permanently on display throughout her performance, whereas the dancer's legs were only briefly and accidentally glimpsed (p.100).
3. L'art du théâtre (1923), p.141. All references are from this edition.
4. Ibid, p.142.
5. Gerda Taranow, Sarah Bernhardt (1972), p.214, suggests that Bernhardt's rejection of the Romeo role was due not so much to the criterion cited, but to the failure of her own plans for a production with Maude Adams as Juliet.
6. 'Men's roles as played by women', Harpers Bazar, 33 (15 December 1900), 2113-2115 (p.2115).
7. Agate, pp.158-9. Agate's allusion to the 'Pierrot' figure is interesting, as it refers to a figure which in the post-Debureau era and decadent vision, had come to signify connotations of the neutered, outsider. (For details, see A.G. Lehmann's essay, 'Pierrot and fin de siècle', in, Romantic Mythologies (1967), pp.209-223.) Bernhardt herself played the part of Pierrot, in Jean Richepin's Pierrot assassin at the Trocadéro in 1883.
8. La Presse, 18 January 1869, p.1.
9. Le Figaro, 15 January 1869, p.3.
10. Quarante ans, VII, pp.113-115 (p.114). Taranow (p.142) indicates that Sarcey reversed his opinion of Sarah's figure in male attire, on her performance as Beaunarchais's Chérubin, at the Comédie Française, 1873.
11. Harper's Bazar, 15 December 1900, p.2114.
12. 25 October 1899, p.8.
13. L'art du théâtre, p.142.
14. 4 December 1896, p.4.

15. 4 December 1896, p.3.
16. Ibid.
17. Le Temps, 7 December 1896, p.2.
18. Le Gaulois, 21 May 1899, p.3.
19. Le Figaro, 21 May 1899, p.4.
20. Le Temps, 22 May 1899, p.2.
21. The Times, 13 June 1899, p.7.
22. At the beginning of the year, the Era had warned her not to expect any mercy from the English critics, and had beseeched her not to make a 'French travestie of an English masterpiece' (21 January 1899, p.19).
23. For further details, see R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, Hamlet Through the Ages (London : Rockliff, 1952), p.24.
24. Mrs Bandmann-Palmer discusses her interest in the part and her preparations for a performance, for which she 'walks, talks and thinks like a man' for 24 hours beforehand, in an interview for the Era, 29 April 1899, p.11.
25. H. Chance Newton, Cues and Curtain Calls (London : John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1927), chapter vii, 'My Fourscore Hamlets', gives a special mention to Mrs Daventry's Hamlet as the 'pizzicato Hamlet'.
26. 12 June 1899, p.9.
27. Harper's Bazar, 15 December 1900, p.2113.
28. 17 June 1899, p.13.
29. 13 June 1899, p.3.
30. 'On seeing Madame Bernhardt's Hamlet', North American Review, 171 (December 1900), 908-919 (p.910).
31. Ibid., p.908.
32. Around Theatres, p.34.
33. Ibid., p.37.
34. L'art du théâtre, p.143. Images of a non-virile Hamlet, which were prevalent in the cultural climate, and which may have influenced Bernhardt's conception of the Danish prince, are those drawn by Laforgue, Mallarmé and Maeterlinck.
35. 'Bernhardt as Hamlet', National Magazine (August 1899), 469-472 (p.469).
36. A Victorian Playgoer (1980), p.85.
37. H. Newton Chance (1927), p.190.
38. Star, 13 June 1899, p.1.
39. The affinity with the young Raphael is pointed out by some critics, for example, see Maurice Baring, Sarah Bernhardt (London : Thomas Nelson, 1938), p.135.
40. 13 June 1899, p.3.

41. Premières of the Year (London : John Macqueen, 1900),p.39.
42. I Knew Sarah Bernhardt (London : Frederick Muller, 1951), p.78.
43. North American Review, p.919.
44. John Hansen, p.470.
45. Era, 17 June 1899, p.17.
46. Hansen, p.469.
47. Grein, p.40.
48. Kate Terry Gielgud, p.84.
49. Some Notable Hamlets (New York, London : Benjamin Blom, 1900; reissued, 1969), pp.43-51.
50. 13 June 1899, p.7.
51. If any one moment in the production fired the imagination of the audience it was the play scene, which was highly typical of stagecraft à la Bernhardt. A description is given from Mrs Alec Tweedie's sketch, in Behind the Footlights, in T.P.'s Weekly, 3 (April 1904), p.482, as follows :

Very quietly she rose from her seat, crawled round to the back, where she gradually and slowly pulled herself up towards the dais, getting upon a stool in her eagerness to see her victim's face. The King, in his excitement, rose from his seat at the fatal moment, and, putting his hand upon the balustrade, peered downwards upon the play-actors. At that instant Sarah Bernhardt rose, and the two faces came close together across the barrier in eager contemplation of each other. It was a magnificent piece of acting, and one which sent a thrill through the whole house; and as the "divine Sarah" saw the guilt depicted upon her uncle's face she gave a shriek of triumph, a perfectly fiendish shriek of joy, once heard never to be forgotten, and, springing down from her post, rushed to the torch footlights, and seizing one in her hand, stood in the middle of the stage, her back to the audience, waving it on high and yelling with wild, exultant delight as the King and all his courtiers slunk away, to the fall of the curtain. It was a brilliant ending to a great act, and Sarah triumphed not only in the novelty of her rendering, but in the manner of its execution.
52. Taranow (pp.220-221) states that neither Lorenzaccio nor Hamlet were to remain in Bernhardt's repertoire. Lorenzaccio, with the exception of a brief revival in 1912, was not performed after 1897, and Hamlet was dropped from her Parisian repertoire after 1900. She calculates that the total number of performances for both plays (Lorenzaccio, 76; Hamlet, 66; total 142), is only half the number of performances given of L'Aiglon.
53. A summary of critical opinion is given by Taranow, p.223.
54. Sarah Bernhardt (Geneva : Alex. Jullien, n.d.), p.110.
55. Rueff, pp.131-2.
56. L'art du théâtre, p.141.
57. May Agate, p.121.
58. Le Figaro, 16 March 1900,p.4.
59. See also, Larroumet's review, in Le Temps, 19 March 1900, 3-4.

60. Duquesnel, reviewing the production for Le Gaulois, 16 March 1900, 2-3, stated, 'Elégante, souple, elle ne donne même pas la sensation d'un travesti, tant elle s'est incorporée au personnage' (p.3).
61. May Agate, p.159. Agate cites Vera Sergine as the actress who played 'L' Aiglon' after Sarah's death.
62. For commentaries and slides of the 1898, 1904 and other twentieth-century productions, including Debussy's opera (1902), see Katharine Worth's Maeterlinck's Plays in Performance (Cambridge : Chadwyck-Healey, 1985).
63. See Beerbohm's review, More Theatres, pp.38 -42. Bernhardt's visible presence in her box was somehow interwoven with his recollection of the production.
64. Rueff, p.137, describes the coaching she gave 'La Patrick', at Bernhardt's request, and Mrs Patrick Campbell, My Life and Some Letters (1922), p.137, states that she borrowed the French governess of Lady Eden's (one of her many high society friends) children, for coaching.
65. Rueff, p.136.
66. The long hair was used essentially for the window scene of the third act, in which Mélisande shakes her tresses so they tumble over Pelléas's face; a piece of stage business successfully carried out by the two actresses. This image heightens the fairy tale connotations, in its affinity with the Rapunzel tale of the princess trapped in the tower, who lets down her hair for her lover riding by in the forest.
67. Margot Peters, Mrs Pat (1984), p.249, states that the costume was designed to lend 'a semblance of manliness to her slight figure'.
68. This was the Dublin critic, quoted by Mrs Patrick Campbell in her memoirs (p.139). The criticism was actually made on the occasion of the 1905 revival, during a three week, provincial, summer tour.
69. Max Beerbohm, from the Saturday Review, quoted by Margot Peters, in Mrs Pat, p.250.
70. Rueff (p.139) recalls Bernhardt's retaliation for 'La Patrick's' condemnation of the stage fountain as a 'silly fishpond', by filling it with 'the most hideous-looking fish', which took the unsuspecting Mrs Pat by surprise, forcing her to choke back her laughter before she could speak her lines.
71. The Times, 2 July 1904, p.12.
72. My Life and Some Letters, p.137.
73. William Emboden, Sarah Bernhardt (London : Studio Vista, Macmillan, 1974), p.161. For details of the production, see Pronier, pp.144-5.
74. One of the least successful, was her role as Assuérus in Racine's Esther, staged by Sardou in 1905, in an attempt to emulate the original Saint-Cyr production, designed for Louis XV and performed entirely by women. An interesting project, but not one which brought favourable criticism for Bernhardt. (See Taranow, p.224)

Section Three : 'Revolting Women'

Chapter 9 : 'La Révoltée'

In the first group of images presented in this study, the family unit was seen to be threatened by the female 'outsider', as dramas focused on the erring sinner as a lively source of theatrical interest and debate. However, the task of keeping hearth, home and particularly husband away from the designs of any unwomanly woman who cared to descend upon and disrupt domestic bliss, ultimately proved to have limited appeal, even to the more conservative and gullible wives. Though ~~they were~~ sequestered and silenced in drawing rooms and dainty salons, with their lord and master as 'spokesman', the seeds of discontent were nevertheless sown, whether as a result of direct experience of the double standard of sexual morality or by indirect, gradual permutation of reformist policies concerning women's rights - or rather lack of them. Sensing the boredom, inequality and captive nature of their destinies, they struggled 'manfully' to be 'free', often to find that freedom denied them and the cage door slammed ever more tightly shut.

This section will therefore document the images of women, both married and single, who expressed discontent with a 'woman's lot' and sought to change their lives, beginning with the image of the discontented wife or révoltée¹ in French drama from the mid 1880's to the 1900's. The révoltée figures heavily in social drama of the Parisian stage of this period, given the introduction of the new divorce law in 1884, which brought discussion of marriage to the fore. Playwrights of the social drama were therefore furnished with a topical and problematic subject, clearly suited to the debating structure of the pièce à thèse.

With no outstanding ameliorations to the English divorce law to capture the popular imagination, the feminist movement not yet at its active, vocal and militant phase, the native English drama of this period is not significantly populated by the révoltée,² It was reluctant if not hostile to the idea of the 'new' as illustrated in its reception of Ibsen. It met the Scandinavian challenge to dramatic form

and content with an enthusiastic crusade to rid the English stage of such a 'foul and filthy' 'open sewer'. How it viewed and received French contributions to dramatic representations of social change, given the hostility to social and artistic innovation, provides further clues to the differing social values held in England and France during this period.

In the whole of this section it is again the actress who provides the key locus for identifying the cross-section of ideological strands pertinent to the changing representation of women in society. As will become clear, the 'new woman' roles in theatre are connotatively and inextricably linked to the changing status and image of the actress in society and in the sexual politics of theatre. A new mould of actress, drawn from middle class, intellectual, politically aware circles, emerges alongside the new, 'experimental' theatres, breaking away from the commercial, star system. In the case of the reception of the French drama on the London stage, it is still the actress, her popular appeal and command of audiences, which operates as a controlling factor in the success or failure of a production.

In terms of French drama, documentation of the révoltée figure and her allied contemporaries in this section, has been restricted to a number of texts, productions and roles, which illustrate the main issues at stake in the theatrical representation of the changing 'roles' of women. The aim is not to provide exhaustive lists of plays and writers, but to document the key areas of debate.³ Further restrictions have been imposed by limiting the section to social drama and contributions from the newly formed hybrids of experimental theatre.⁴

In the main, the voice of the révoltée in the drama of the period, remains one of discontent. It gives expression to the malaise apparent in the relationship between women and society but as yet does not have the power, vision or terminology for an alternative and better world. She voices a refusal to accept her given roles as wife and mother, but as yet, has no language, no name, for her desires. The voice of refusal results in a daunting, painful awareness of a society in which she has no place, and her consequent retreat into silence.

An examination of Villiers de l'Isle Adam's proto-révoltée, Elisabeth, in his play, La révolte (1870), provides an early example of the réveil crucial to the genesis

and understanding of the development of this role and image in the 1880's and onwards.

Villier's La révolte is a one act, symbolist drama, which voices the discontent of the unhappy wife, fourteen years before Ibsen's Nora makes her first appearance on the French stage. Elisabeth, the révoltée, shares the symbolist's vision of the world of ideals, poetry and dreams. Yet she is married to a man who is limited by the everyday realities of the middle class, commercial, business world. Their dialogue represents the clash of ideals and realities. Elisabeth leaves her husband but returns, having admitted to herself the impossibility of escaping the repressive and deadening bourgeois values which weigh her down.

Villier's directions for the performance indicate that but for a desk lamp, the remainder of the theatre is in darkness. Elisabeth's movements are frequently directed towards the light; a weak glimmer in a space of darkness. Dressed in black she already personifies the darkness she ultimately recognizes in her soul; a darkness which ties her to the world she knows, given that it is the only possible world. Her speeches in the first scene reveal an urgent desire for light and life:

Je veux vivre! entendez-vous, insensé que vous êtes ! Vous ne comprenez pas cela, vous, qu'on puisse raisonnablement vouloir vivre? Enfin, j'étouffe ici, moi! Je meurs de mon vivant! J'ai soif de choses sérieuses ! Je veux respirer le grand air du ciel ! Emporterai-je vos billets de banque dans la tombe? Combien croyez-vous donc qu'on ait de temps à vivre? 5

She leaves, giving her husband a parting gift of a crystal paperweight, a symbol of light in darkness, though heavy and solid, weighed down, but returns in the final scene, having recognised the deadness of her world as unchangeable. She returns to the old and only language, exclaiming, 'quand je pense, mon ami, que je parlais de vous quitter au moment de la balance du semestre!...Enfin, cela n'avait pas le sens commun?' (scene 3, p.45).

Villiers encountered several delays in getting the play put on⁶, despite the backing of the popular Dumas fils, and the support of the talented Mlle Fargueil, who ultimately took the leading role at the Vaudeville.⁷ On production, the play

provoked a furore of adverse criticism; principally from the popular press and though the balance was somewhat redressed, by the glowing, enthusiastic epitaphs of Villier's friends and colleagues, in effect, they did more harm than good in overstating their praise. Amongst the protestors was Barbey d'Aurevilly, somewhat surprising, for 'one of the most flamboyant survivors of high Romanticism, who in many ways seems almost like an elder brother of Villiers' (Raitt, p.104). Having heaped scorn on the head of the author, he also attributed some of the failure to Mlle Fargueil, stating that her incarnation of 'la Poésie', was incompatible with her own physique; 'cette Poésie nous donne alors une surabondance de phrases poétiques, qui ne sont plus du tout dans la physionomie de mademoiselle Fargueil'.⁸ Sarcey also complained, but about her speech, rather than her physiomy, which he criticized for its indistinctness.⁹ On the other hand, the review in Le Gaulois claimed she was the production's saving grace,¹⁰ and those who were sympathetic towards Villier's drama, were all the more complimentary about Mlle Fargueil's performance. 'Mlle Fargueil, si éloquente, si désespérée, si indignée, résumant en elle toute une race', wrote Théodore de Banville, 'a été incomparablement belle',¹¹ while Catulle Mendès was of the opinion that she had never found such a role to offset her talent and intelligence.¹²

However, all in all, Villier's play was neither well liked nor understood. Some critics, like Pierre Wolff, who could not understand the mournful music and striking clock, which filled the stage during Elisabeth's absence,¹³ were totally baffled. The adverse criticism reflects, in part, the inability to 'read' a play which offered no convenient scène à faire or adulterous triangle,¹⁴ and which offered no solution to Elisabeth's plight; simply a silent denial of an alternative world.¹⁵

After its curtailed run in 1870, when it was taken off after only five performances, more successful and better received productions of La révolte¹⁶ were put on on the French stage, but in England, critical comment on the play retained the original stigma of failure. In December 1897, a translation of the play by Mrs Theresa Barclay, was published in the Fortnightly Review. This highly literal translation, literal to the degree that it transformed Villier's expressions of poésie into a uniform, prosaic drabness, was prefaced by introductory comments establishing a comparison

between La révolte and Ibsen's A Doll's House. ^{Though the plays are} frequently cited as thematically parallel dramas, Villier's play always comes off worse :

But while the subject is the same the plan of the two pieces is entirely different. Ibsen's work is that of a master of dramatic construction. Villiers essentially a dreamer and a poet, was indifferent to stage effect, and would have considered it beneath him to make an effort to please the general taste. 17

The preface concludes that, 'it is owing to Ibsen that the public taste has been sufficiently educated to understand him [Villiers]'.¹⁸ Perhaps a more accurate statement would be, that it had taken a further twenty years or so, to give serious consideration to women's grievances, given that education in 'public taste' refers as much to Villier's dramatic form, as to his content.

Max Beerbohm offers the following brief comment on a production of the play in April 1906, which used Lady Barclay's translation :

In this little play Villiers de l'Isle Adam said all that Ibsen said later in A Doll's House. And, as all that there is to be said about what Ibsen said later has been said long ago, I won't now detain you with Villiers, whose play is interesting only in connexion and comparison with Ibsen's - interesting as an example of the needfulness of form to substance. Miss Louise Salom, as the rebellious lady, acted very intelligently, though at times too slowly. It goes without saying that Mr Symons had made an admirable translation. 19

Clearly, by this time, the play is regarded with little other than an historical interest; its subject matter now out of date.²⁰

Yet none of these comments demonstrates either an interest in, or understanding of, the deep structure behind the surface struggle between husband and wife, that the play dramatizes. A modern revival of the play in the late seventies, translated by Donald Watson and directed by Simone Benmussa, for the Theatre at New End, with Susan Hampshire as Elisabeth, finally demonstrated the understanding that had been so lacking. In her programme notes accompanying the production, Benmussa describes the play as 'a play about language, a play in which two forms of language are brought into violent opposition, and two forms of society with them'. As a 'sequestered woman' Benmussa writes, Elisabeth is 'condemned to

silence'; a 'woman on the fringe of History'. What Villiers dramatizes therefore is the alienation of women in their relationship with society and language. His vocabulary of oppositions - words/silence, life/death, light/darkness - describe the relativity of woman, the silent shadow, the darkness, and man the light, empowered with speech. Perhaps it is only now, in the wake of attempts to theorize the problems of language and gender that an understanding and the 'language' or terminology exist to grasp and to express, the concept of female negativity.²¹ Small wonder that the signification of the wordless woman, without a language of desire, was missed in 1870. Perhaps a better comparison than Ibsen and Villiers, would be to compare Villiers with Genet; that is, as poet/dramatist who aligns his voice with the darkness, the 'otherness', to which the silence of female desire belongs.²²

Villiers was utterly disheartened by the reception of his play in 1870,²³ yet there were other dramatists ready to take up the cause of the 'voiceless' woman, and align their voices with her unspoken grievances and desires. One of the main campaigners for women's rights in the French social drama of the late nineteenth century, was Paul Hervieu.

Hervieu made his reputation as a novelist and then turned to drama with his first play, Point de lendemain, performed at the Cercle de l'Union artistique in 1890, and continued his theatrical career until 1912, with his last play, Bagatelle, performed at the Comédie Française.²⁴ It was his second play, Les paroles restent, which established him as 'an important new naturalist', recognized by Albert Carré, director of the Vaudeville.²⁵ Some saw him as a champion of the woman's cause and an advocate of divorce; others as a writer of drab, formulaic theatre. He was also claimed as 'the present master-psychologist of the French stage';²⁶ 'une sorte de Zola du théâtre psychologique'.²⁷ Hervieu used his position as a dramatist to bring the rights and wrongs of unhappy wives and inadequate divorce laws to the attention of fashionable, middle class theatre audiences; audiences who now begin to find an uncomfortable rapport between their experience of life and that experience mirrored in dramatic art.²⁸ Even though the social milieu of Hervieu's plays was restricted to the remnants of the French aristocracy and his radicalism bound by the conventions of mainstream theatre, his demonstration of women as

second class citizens at least invites the collective, spectating body to confront its own complicity in the generation of inequalities for which it is responsible.

Although divorce had been reintroduced in Naquet's bill of 1884, it only constituted the most moderate concept of divorce, divorce sanction,²⁹ which did not permit divorce by mutual consent or on the grounds of incompatibility. The inadequacies of the bill, its failings and shortcomings, frequently form part of the plot mechanism in Hervieu's plays or provide discussion topics for his characters. Some, like Sarcey were critical of the subjugation of theatre to the presentation of social issues. Using the debating structure of the pièce à thèse, which presents the pros and cons of an argument and arrives at some sort of conclusion, if only in terms of the logical, dramatic ending, runs the risk of ignoring characterization and other dramatic effects. However, Hervieu was fortunate enough to secure the talents of players whose skill, popularity and connotations of the 'new', brought his drama alive, when it might otherwise have proved lacking in theatrical dynamism. Three actresses in particular are central to the révoltée roles, namely, Mlle Bartet, Mlle Marthe Brandès and Réjane. Bartet and Brandès were the two main interpreters of Hervieu's drama; Réjane was instrumental in introducing Hervieu's work to English audiences.

Central to Hervieu's conception of the révoltée are Les tennailles, performed at the Théâtre Français in 1895 with Mlle Brandès as the unfortunate Irène Fergan and La loi de l'homme, also produced at the Théâtre Français in 1897 with Bartet as the révoltée, Laure Raguais.

Both plays demonstrate the inadequacies of the new divorce law. Les tennailles relates the story of the unfortunate marriage of Robert and Irène Fergan. Despite sisterly advice Irène cannot reconcile herself to her marital unhappiness. Having fallen in love with a childhood sweetheart, she pleads with her husband for a divorce, but he refuses. The final act shows the Fergan household ten years later, where things are still as miserable. A quarrel ensues over their only son's education, as a result of which Irène reveals Robert is not the father,³⁰ and therefore has no paternal rights. Now it is Fergan who demands a divorce, but Irène who refuses, inviting him to share the same hell.

LE THÉÂTRE



DAGNAN-BOUVÉRET, del.

Le Théâtre

1920

M^{lle} JULIA BARTET

DE LA COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE

Photo Goupil.

THE PROVIDENT

ATHENAEUM

What the debate centred around the divorce question demonstrates, therefore, are the inadequacies of the divorce sanction which does not permit divorce on grounds of incompatibility. As Fergan exclaims, 'La loi nouvelle n'a seulement pas admis le divorce par consentement mutuel',³¹ and threatens to bring his wife back to the 'foyer' by police force if she flees; 'j'en ai le droit'. The idea of the social degradation, the inevitable loss of social standing in society entailed in the dissolution of marriage by divorce outrages him :

de n'être plus qu'un homme divorcé, un homme qui vend la moitié de ses immeubles, qui vide à moitié son portefeuille, auquel il ne reste qu'une demi-façade dans la société. Tout cela parce qu'il vous plaît de ne plus avoir de goût pour ma compagnie? (vol I, II.9.pp.195-6)

He refuses to consider his wife's feelings and assumes her unhappiness to be entirely of her own making.

In La loi de l'homme when Laure Raguais discovers the infidelities of her husband, she also discovers how impotent is the possibility of legal retribution. A man simply visiting his mistress, as the commissionaire explains to her in the first act, is still not punishable by law, despite the new amendments, whereas a woman would be. By contrast, the cuckold husband is entitled to take whatever revenge he sees fit, with the law's blessing; 's'il est massacreur, la loi dit qu'il est excusable de les tuer tous les deux' (vol I, I.6.p.34).³² The wife also has no claim to her fortune, which automatically becomes her husband's.

Laure therefore chooses to live apart from her husband. Some years later the consequences of this separation are witnessed, as Laure's daughter falls in love with the son of her husband's mistress. When Laure wishes to prevent the marriage, she discovers a further inequality in the legal system; it does not require a mother's consent for her child to marry; 'en cas de dissentement le consentement du père suffit' (vol I, III.1.p. 90). Ultimately, the parents of the two children sacrifice their own 'happinesses', agreeing to keep up respectable, domestic façades, by giving up their illicit liaisons.³³

With these two plays, Hervieu's reputation as an advocate of the amelioration

of women's rights, was established, along with the characterization of the révoltée. In an account of the roles of Irène and Laure by Gaston Rageot in La Revue d'Art dramatique,³⁴ the natural tendency of 'la femme civilisée' is described as submission and acceptance and contrasted with the primitivism of Hervieu's révoltée; 'Irène et Laure se distinguent par une âpreté singulière: Irène parle de défendre son fils "férocement", et Laure menace son mari de ses "dents et de ses griffes"'.³⁵ He concludes that they understand nothing of the 'exigences de la société. La loi est pour elles lettre morte'.

Hervieu's conception of the révoltée clearly generated unease, as demonstrated by certain critical responses which pointed to reminders of wifely duties and unfair treatment of husbands! Sarcey transferred his sympathies in Les tenailles to the 'wronged' husband. He accused Hervieu of overstating Irène's case,³⁶ but whereas Sarcey constantly attributes his criticisms to a dislike of Hervieu's dull, formulaic theatre, what really prompts his criticism are anti-feminist sympathies; adherence to the 'old' rather than the 'new'.

Critics also compared Hervieu with Ibsen.³⁷ The Scandinavian influence is, however, difficult to determine. Comparing playtexts may prove a mutually illuminating process as an academic exercise, but is not a reliable way of ascertaining the affinities decoded by audiences of the period in a performance context. However, one means of establishing such affinities is to take the actress as the signifying point of contact. Consider, for example, the actress Marthe Brandès, who in 1891 played the leading role in Hedda Gabler at the Vaudeville, and then in 1895 took the part of Irène. A general description of Brandès is given as follows :

Je pense à Irène Fergan des Tenailles, à Germaine d' Amoureuse, surtout à ^{la} Dominique du Passé, qui fut son dernier triomphe à la Comédie Française. Je pense aussi à Hedda Gabler, cette terrible figure du repertoire ibsénien que, seule, elle eut l'audace d'affronter. L'énergique ardeur de ses traits, le port relevé de sa tête, l'angle tragique de son visage où deux yeux passionnés et la bouche, quand elle s'entr'ouvre, creuse l'ombre des masques antiques; ce qu'il y a de simplement sculptural dans la ligne de son corps et de dramatique dans ses mouvements, - tout cela, et sa voix sourde, comme intérieure, mais puissante, évoquait déjà, à travers une forme sans défaut, l'âme de ces femmes malheureuses et leur grande force brisée.³⁸

As an actress, Brandès is therefore the connotative sum of her self as a woman-



Marthe Brandès

the physi^omy of he features, her gestures and her mo^vements, the sound of her voice - which combines with the composite public sphere of her theatrical roles to create the de-codable sign of the modern, discontented woman.

The energy and 'nervosité' which Brandès brought to her interpretation of a 'grande force brisée' in Les tenailles, was begrudgingly admired by Sarcey :

Mlle Brandès, à travers les rugosités d'une voix dont elle n'est pas maîtresse, a joué le rôle d'Irène avec beaucoup de nervosité et d'importement; pas assez variée à mon sens dans l'expression de ses colères et de ses révoltes, mais remarquable dans les passages qui demandent surtout de l'énergie. 39

Le Gaulois complimented her on her 'beaux cris de désespoir et de révolte', particularly those of the final scene,⁴⁰ and Fouquier in Le Figaro, praised the quality of her performance after her recent illness and indicated an understanding of the type of modern woman she portrayed :

elle a traduit la modernité souffrante des femmes de nos jours, cette aspiration à la liberté des coeurs et à la vérité des amours qui lutte chez elles avec les lois, les traditions, les croyances, les moeurs, ne se contentant pas de bas compromis par lesquels celles-ci les veulent satisfaire. Elle s'est montrée passionnée et douloureuse, violente et mélancolique, très diverse et toujours d'un art dont la vérité reste noble et réglée. Elle a eu là une soirée décisive. 41

Likewise, Bartet was associated with the modern drama, taking several of the roles created by the 'new' dramatists, such as Lavedan, Donnay or Hervieu. Sarcey describes her in La loi de l'homme as, 'vibrante de passion...C'est vraiment une comédienne, celle- là, et une comédienne qui porte dans ces oeuvres étriquées la grande allure dont elle a contracté l'habitude enjouant le vieux répertoire'.⁴² Sarcey pinpoints the signification of Bartet's star image; her representation if not personification, of the French national theatre. On both sides of the channel she received acclaim for her interpretations of the classical tragedy (the role of Bérénice in particular), so that the tragic genre, the majesty, and noblesse denoted by cultural recognition of tragedy as a form of 'High Art', are present in the grace and talent of Bartet. Though the unseen forces of tragic destiny are now replaced by the tangible forces of man-made laws and social conflicts, the her^os and heroines of

Hervieu's plays still move within the circles of nobility and Bartet's signification of respectability (both in her public and private life), is less incongruous in the context of the 'new' than one might at first suppose.

In the role of Laure, it was the passion with which she depicted the modern woman that the critics so admired. Duquesnel pointed out that she offered more than emotional display; she brought a dimension of spontaneity and sincerity which went far beyond conscious artistry and the manipulation of audience sympathies.⁴³

Adverse male reactions to the concept of divorce are given a brutal airing in Hervieu's later play, L'énigme, performed for the first time at the Théâtre Français, November 1901. The play is based on two couples, one of whom harbours an adulteress wife, but whose identity is concealed until the close of the drama. In this play, Brandès and Bartet played along side each other, as the wives, Léonore and Giselle, Bartet as Léonore, proving ultimately to be the guilty party.

In the first act of the play, the discussion of divorce is purely academic. The two husbands, Gérard and Raymond adopt the anti-divorce view and the debate is vigorously centred around the question of whether an unfaithful wife should be killed. Raymond refers again to the article which allows the husband freedom to carry out his own 'justice' and defends this right. Ultimately the debate comes to life in the second act when an act of infidelity is perpetrated and results in the suicide of the adulterer. The husbands still see themselves, even in the light of events, as protectors of the institution of marriage; 'ce sont les hommes de notre espèce qui, à travers les temps, assurent le règne du mariage, en veillant sur lui, les armes à la main, comme sur une majesté' (vol II, II.14.pp.88-9). Yet the final word goes to the raisonneur of the play, the Marquis de Neste; the voice of reason and clemency. Given the convention of the raisonneur as the mouthpiece of the dramatist and the popularity of the actor Le Bargy who took the role of the Marquis, plus the respectable connotations of Bartet in her role as the guilty party, the line of forgiveness clearly outweighs the savage, brutal and primitive male reactions.

Critics were unanimous in their praise of Bartet and Brandès, though their applause of Brandès was overshadowed by their enthusiasm for Bartet's performance.

Larroumet stated that it was her best role since the success of Denise,⁴⁴ and Duquesnel went even further in his praise for her naturalness, by stating that 'une telle évocation de la vérité' had not been seen since Duse.⁴⁵ The highlight of her performance was her final cry of anguish signifying her guilt; a cry which sent a shudder through the first night audience and subsequently, as Albert Dubeux describes in Bartet's biography, brought the whole of the Parisian theatre public to see her Léonore.⁴⁶

Though most of the praise went to Bartet, the success of the production depended on both actresses working as a team, in order to keep the audiences guessing at the truth. Hence they adopted different attitudes, 'la coupable plus réservée, l'innocente plus imprudente en ses propos'.⁴⁷ In his reminiscences of this theatrical period, Jean Cocteau recalls a cartoon from Le Théâtre, which played on the guessing game theme :

le profil crochu de jeune chouette de Mme Bartet la divine et le profil chevalin de Marthe Brandès s'affrontent sur un escalier de château. A qui l'amant ? Ces dames portent, d'une main, de petites lampes à globes et pincent de l'autre, leurs peignoirs garnis de broderies anglaises et de fanfreluches. 48

For once, therefore, Hervieu's play was not just a lecture on divorce law, but was also an entertaining form of suspense drama.

Looking at some of the English responses to Hervieu's révoltées and the actresses who played them, provides an interesting comparative insight into attitudes to the modern woman and marriage question.

The Era's correspondent in Paris, reviewing Bartet's performances, echoes the French critics in admiration for the talent, beauty, grace and harmony which were constantly foregrounded in her interpretations. In La loi de l'homme, in which the correspondent appeared to be rather muddled about the ins and outs of French divorce law, the success of the evening was attributed to the 'charm diffused by Mdlle Bartet through the entire performance'; her 'infinite pathos and great dramatic force'.⁴⁹ Reviewing the production of Les tenailles, the correspondent confirmed the play as a major step for Marthe Brandès, in establishing herself at her national theatre :



Julia Bartet :
'La Divine'



Julia Bartet

Mdlle Brandès plays the role of the wife with great talent, her passion never becoming melodramatic, although it grows intense at the close, and her suffering being touchingly portrayed throughout. The rising actress had not yet obtained such a decided success at the Français. 50

In the dual performance of Brandès and Bartet in L'énigme the English review eclipsed Brandès in the commendation of Bartet:

Mdlle Bartet's rendering of the part of Léonore will count, I think, amongst her most exquisite "creations". It is a difficult, complex part, but the delicious artist interprets it in her most finished style, with infinite charm and talent. Mdlle Brandès is also very successful in her delineation of Giselle, a character quite different from that of Léonore. 51

Though Bartet constantly received more attention, at least Brandès had a more detailed mention than the actors in these révoltée productions, who^{were} totally eclipsed by the actresses. In describing the actors and their roles, the correspondent generally used the standard cliché 'made the most of a thankless part'. Le Bargy frequently partnered Bartet in the modern drama, and his antipathetic role of brutish husband, in addition to his tendency towards 'staginess' in his style of playing, did little to promote his own star image, but foregrounded the brilliance of Bartet.

In Bartet's London seasons she was generally well received and welcomed by London's high society élite and it was for her modern rather than classical repertoire that she found favour.⁵² Not that the modern women she played were always well understood. For instance, when she played La loi de l'homme at the Shaftesbury in May 1903, though the Era praised her 'intense emotionalism', it described her révoltée as a woman 'who has not been taught the virtue of self-control', thereby completely^p misunderstanding the spirit of revolt.⁵³

The contrast between English and French attitudes to the révoltée type, becomes more apparent in English translations or adaptations of the plays. Two examples will suffice to make the point.

La loi de l'homme was adapted by C.H.E. Brookfield for a performance at the Criterion Theatre in December 1899, and called One Law for Man. The adaptation differed radically from the original, because it omitted the major confrontation between the révoltée and the cuckolded husband, when she explains his wife's adultery.

In the adaptation she simply resigned herself to a 'pretend reconciliation' with her own husband. Playing the injured wife, Miss Edith Woodworth had some 'spirit' but also plenty of 'real tenderness and delicate sweetness', which had none of the 'savage discontent of the original'.⁵⁴

The contrast in marital arguments is more forcefully brought out in the second, more detailed example, of Mrs Tree's production of L'énigme, performed at Wyndham's Theatre in March 1902. Staged as part of a triple bill,⁵⁵ Hervieu's play going by the title, Caesar's Wife, invited most interest and critical comment. The change in title is indicative of the amendments which had to be made in order for the play to be passed by the Censor, notably the change from the sin of adultery to the 'heinous' crime of flirtation; 'the lady was what the French call mise en reforme her guilt blanched with chastening powder; flirtation took the place of outspoken faithlessness'.⁵⁶ It is therefore absurd, as The Times pointed out, for Raymond to, 'treat his wife as guilty if she has merely been indiscreet, if she is not like Caesar's wife, above suspicion'.⁵⁷ Hence, the husband changes from the recognizable brutish bully, to an outright 'lunatic' and the suicide of the lover is rendered utterly ridiculous. However, as The Times reviewer continued, audiences were perfectly capable of 'reading' adultery for flirtation, noting that 'the mind of the onlooker silently, automatically, puts back what has been taken away'.

Despite such amendments, criticisms were still levelled at the drama for being 'intensely French', and relating to 'nothing in our insular habits and modes of thought'.⁵⁸ Laws, lovers, husbands and morals are all cited as alien to English attitudes; to a race which had never adhered to the concept of the crime passionelle. The recurrent use of the word 'insular' in the English reviews is significant in its connotations of the morally impregnable; an island of chastity and restraint in a continental sea of immoral, sexual behaviour.

In terms of dramatic convention, the English public clearly found the 'speechifying' or 'preachiness' of Hervieu's pièce à thèse alien to their theatre. In particular the raisonneur, who does most of the 'preaching' was not readily received by audiences, unused to and uncomfortable with the French convention of authorial mouthpiece. Neither was Mr F. Kerr, who undertook the part quite at ease or at home in the

role. 'The part which stood out in Paris, the old Marquis, stood here upon the second plane', wrote J.T. Grein. 'We all like Mr F. Kerr in his own particular line, but a raisonneur and a French Marquis - that is something quite different from an English clubman of heavy gait and deliberate action'.⁵⁹

Again, the women's roles attracted most interest, the parts being taken by Miss Lena Ashwell and Miss Fay Davis, as Léonore and Giselle respectively. With the exception of Arthur Symonds who preferred Miss Fay Davis to Miss Lena Ashwell, whose performance he felt 'became stagey at most of the difficult moments',⁶⁰ it was Miss Lena Ashwell's performance which drew forth much comment and praise, not least of all, because she had the most emotional and dramatic role. As in the case of Brandès and Bartet, Davis found herself playing second fiddle to Ashwell's more striking part :

Miss Lena Ashwell enacted Léonore De Gourgiran with her usual intensity and impressiveness. Miss Ashwell's depiction of bitter indignation was extremely keen and powerful; and in the scene in which the erring wife confesses her guilt this fine actress gave further evidence of her dramatic ability. Miss Fay Davis showed much of her wonted charm and delicacy as Giselle. Miss Davis certainly had little to do, but every point was made with great sharpness and tact, and Giselle's spirited defence of her sex was delivered most vivaciously.⁶¹

What is also interesting, are the ways in which foreknowledge of the actresses possibly counteracted Hervieu's enigmatic game. Given the suspense technique of not revealing the guilty wife until the end of the drama, the audience had to be kept in the dark as part of the guessing game. Knowledge of the actresses, however, in particular of Miss Lena Ashwell, who had already achieved fame in the part of a 'woman with a past', in Mrs Dane's Defence, invited other coded clues into the performance context :

Before the play begins he [the spectator] has only to look at his programme to make up his mind, from the names of the actresses, which is going to play the guilty - that is, the "emotional" - part. And when the play has actually begun he knows - it is a law of the game - that the guilty woman is bound to be the one from whom suspicion is at first carefully diverted.⁶²

The enigma device might have worked better if Mrs Tree had played opposite Miss

Fay Davis, as originally intended. Beerbohm, for instance, makes the following point :

Much of the play's point is lost if Léonore and her sister-in-law, Giselle, be not women of the same mould and manner. Between the method and aspect of Mrs Tree and Miss Fay Davis there is a certain superficial resemblance. But Miss Lena Ashwell, who played Mrs Tree's part is as unlike to Miss Fay Davis as one actress can be to another. The play's point, to which I have referred, is that almost to the last moment the audience cannot guess of which of the two women Vivarce is the lover. 63

The amendments to Hervieu's L'énigme clearly point towards the gap between the continental and the English 'insular' codes of sexual morality. One suspects that the English populace prefers not to wash its dirty marital linen in public, but has come to expect it of the French, and adopts a rather patronizing view of continental marital difficulties, from which it dissociates itself.

The révoltée plays described to date, demonstrate the demand of the discontented wife for greater happiness, and show the inequalities of French divorce law, which stands in their way of greater, personal freedom. However, counter-arguments based on religious or family grounds, emerge in the révoltée drama, indicating how the quest for happiness would not be successful if it entailed ruining the lives of others. Hervieu, himself, dramatized anti-divorce arguments in the case of the family, as will become clear in the next chapter, reserved for those aspects of divorce and family issues, more pertinent to the mother-figure.

Amongst such debating points, was the question of remarriage, in cases where the first husband was still alive. The question was raised in Abel Hermant's L'empreinte, first performed at the Théâtre Antoine in March 1900. Hermant's play proposes that it is wrong to remarry after a divorce if the previous husband is still alive. Marceline is on the verge of taking a lover when her husband discovers her intention. Ignoring her entreaty for clemency, he divorces her and she marries her intended lover, leaving her condemned to a marriage, frowned upon by society, the unhappiness of which will drive her to a succession of future lovers (implied in the closing tableau of the play). The conflict of the 'old' and 'new' generations of women,

between devoir and bonheur,⁶⁴ is dramatised in the mother and daughter relationship. The traditional sense of duty and religion is embodied in Madame Surgères, and the search for happiness without guiding values, in her daughter, Marceline. Mme Surgères fails to understand the pro-divorce arguments, coming from a generation of women who stoically accepted whatever fate marriage dealt them and relinquished their desires and needs to those of their husbands. Marceline blames her mother and her mother's generation for the confusion and lawlessness of her own life and those of her contemporaries :

Marceline

Mais enfin, tu avais la foi, oui ou non. Si tu l'avais tu devais passer par-dessus tout.

Madame Surgères

Je ne sais pas trop si j'avais la foi; mais j'avais un petit reste qui m'a bien servi.

Marceline

Eh bien, tu aurais joliment dû le partager avec moi, ton petit reste ! Il m'aurait bien servi aussi !

Madame Surgères

A quoi ?

Marceline

Comment : à quoi? Mais à me donner une direction dans la vie, un point d'appui, une sécurité, une raison d'être et d'agir, une raison de faire ceci plutôt que cela. Vous croyez avoir tout dit, toi et tes contemporaines, quand vous avez déploré nos idées subversives, et quand vous avez traité vos filles de détraquées. Détraquées, c'est possible : à qui la faute? Il nous faudrait vraiment des têtes solides! Comment veux-tu qu'on s'y retrouve? Nous avons grandi entre des mères à moitié croyantes et des pères tout à fait athées. Quelle morale nous avez-vous donnée à défaut de la religion? Oh! des exemples très édifiants, de la morale en action, vous êtes de vraies, de grandes honnêtes femmes. Pourquoi, d'ailleurs? Vous avez omis de nous le dire. L'exemple ne suffit pas, il nous aurait fallu quelques principes, un peu de doctrine, un pauvre petit catéchisme, faut-il lâcher. Vous ne nous avez même pas laissé, comme dernière planche de salut, le respect de l'idéal bourgeois qui avait été le vôtre. Vous l'avez réalisé sous nos yeux, mais vous ne vous êtes pas fait faute de le laisser railler ou de le railler vous-même devant nous ;vous avez achevé de nous dérouter en ayant des indulgences incompréhensibles pour toutes celles qui s'y dérobaient, à condition que ce fût en cachette et honteusement. Enfin, qu'est-ce que tu veux, ma pauvre maman? nous sommes arrivées à l'âge de femmes, ahuries, c'est le mot, littéralement ahuries, autant par vos idées larges que par vos exemples étroits. 65

Given her lack of faith and guiding sense of duty, Marceline has taken the happiness

quest as her guiding principle; 'on a le droit de courir après son bonheur quand il vous échappe, on a le devoir de vivre toute sa vie' (I.4.p.34). Yet her quest is one which takes her from an unacceptable marriage to a state of further social degradation and gross unhappiness. Finding no comfort in a religious support system, and rejecting a sense of wifely or familial duty, the révoltée, via her nihilistic refusal of social values, finds herself an outcast.

The play was not favourably reviewed, partly because there were objections to the monotonous composition and dispiriting conclusion,⁶⁶ but also because not everyone agreed with Hermant's theory that women were branded by their first marriages.⁶⁷ Neither did Mlle Mellot's performance as Marceline greatly impress the critics, who generally found fault with her affected style, and her manner of speaking through her nose, which grated on the ear, 'comme une scie de clarinette'.⁶⁸

If Marceline's husband had only been prepared to forgive her initial longings for love and happiness outside the boundaries of the marriage institution, much of the grief and tragedy might have been avoided. As it is, her former husband's admission of guilt and words of forgiveness come too late. Working towards establishing a recognition of male guilt, and away from the notion that a wife's unhappiness is purely of her own making, is also embodied in the révoltée plays. There are several which take the idea of a mutual pardon as their dramatic argument, in order to expose the inequality of the double standard of sexual morality; to show the hypocrisy of men who deny women the right to sexual freedom, while condoning their own right to indulge in 'illicit' sexual relationships. Two plays which use this argument, are La vassale by Jules Case, first performed at the Comédie Française in July 1897, and Maurice Donnay's La douloureuse, performed at the Vaudeville in February of the same year.

In La vassale, Louise, a 'new woman', is unhappy in her marriage to Henri Deschamps. She has many admirers, but remains faithful, until she discovers that Henri has taken her confidente, Mme Gerboy, as his mistress. To even the score, Louise also has an affair which outrages her husband. She argues that their faults are equal; 'nos fautes sont égales...expions-les ensemble, dans le même remords,- dans le pardon réciproque'.⁶⁹ Henri refuses to believe in the possibility of an equal

pardon and Louise is forced to slam the door on home and family.⁷⁰ Critic and playwright, Jules Lemaître thought it was a mistake to have Louise walking out on a husband and a family. Though Lemaître argued that Louise was right to leave, it was wrong of the author,

à ce moment-là, de faire intervenir l'enfant. "Et votre fille? demande Henri. - Ah! c'est vrai, dit elle. Pauvre petite!...Quel dommage, mon Dieu! Mais quoi! elle serait malheureuse entre nous deux". Et la mère prend la photographie de sa fille, et la baise en larmoyant. Elle s'en va tout de même. Seulement, elle est un peu plus odieuse en s'en allant: ce qui, je crois n'était pas dans le dessein de l'auteur. Il ne fallait pas d'enfant ici. ⁷¹

The role was therefore complex as it invited sympathy for the wife who understandably left a brute of a husband, but who was also a mother who abandoned her child.⁷²

Neither is her departure wholly successful given that it is the result of revenge, rather than a self-motivated desire for independence and freedom.

Henri Deschamps epitomizes the inability of husbands to understand the desires and needs of the modern woman. His old friend, Chabonnas, attempts to explain them to him :

la femme, elle aussi, a changé. Elle n'est plus la servante docile qui tremblait devant nos ancêtres. Nos pères, au contraire, l'ont prise en pitié; ils l'ont allégée déjà des tutelles trop lourdes, ils l'ont instruite, ils lui ont promis l'indépendance. Ils ont créé une femme nouvelle...Et elle est logique, aussi, cette femme-là. On lui a donné le goût de la liberté, on a relevé sa condition: elle veut plus encore, elle réclame la révision du vieux code de fer qui l'asservit. Elle nous refuse l'obéissance, elle se déclare notre égale. (I.3.p.25)

However, such explanations are wasted on a husband who sees his wife purely as a possession. Any indication of sexual liberation on her part is considered a desecration of the chaste woman he 'owns'.⁷³

Critics viewed *Case* as a second rate *Hervieu* or *Ibsen*. There was little sympathy for the play and its gloomy conclusion, but plenty of praise for *Marthe Brandès* who added another discontented wife to her repertoire. *Sarcey* was grateful to her for rescuing 'l'ignominie de la fin par l'emportement d'une douleur vraie',⁷⁴ and *Fouquier* claimed that her initial reluctance in accepting the role was unfounded,

'car ce rôle est un de ses meilleurs. Elle y a montré une grande souplesse, un charme pénétrant et une habileté extrême'.⁷⁵

Donnay's La douloureuse, makes further inroads into the question of forgiveness.

The play argues persuasively in favour of a mutual pardon between Hélène and Philippe Lauberthie. Hélène is married to Gaston Ardan in the opening act, but he conveniently commits suicide, when faced with financial ruin, leaving the way clear for the love between Hélène and Philippe to develop. However, the familiar dramatic technique of the obstructive confidente figure, contrives to upset the affair by using her role as go-between to establish a second liaison between herself and Philippe. Filled with remorse, Philippe informs the confidente that the affair must end and out of wounded pride, she retaliates by telling him that Hélène's son was not fathered by her dead husband but by a former lover. In an angry and tearful confrontation scene, Philippe acts the outraged and unforgiving male. Helen challenges his hypocrisy:

Eh bien, non, nous sommes quittes, mon cher...oui, j'ai eu un amant et je relève tout de même la tête...j'invoque pour moi, femme, le droit à l'amour; ce sont tes doctrines et je suis ton élève après tout...j'ai eu un amant comme tu as eu des maîtresses.

Philippe

Ah! Hélène ça n'est pas la même chose. ⁷⁶

In the final act, however, Donnay has advanced on Case's bigoted male. by depicting a repentant and forgiving Philippe, ready to accept a life with Hélène and her son.

The confrontation scene was the highlight of the play and its success was due to the talents of Réjane :

Qui ne se souvient de la grande scène de La douloureuse, où elle passait de la gaieté à l'étonnement, à la douleur, et où, réfléchissant tout à coup et se voyant trahie, elle revenait de la douleur à l'indignation? Il est difficile, depuis le temps où Racine faisait des tragédies pour la Champmeslé, de démêler l'influence que les comédiens ont sur l'art dramatique de leur temps. Mais il y a au moins une correspondance merveilleuse entre les interprètes et le génie des auteurs, puisque M. Donnay a trouvé, pour son art flexible et nuancé, une comédienne unique pour le représenter. ⁷⁷

The remarkable quality of Réjane's image was its plurality and diversity; a refreshing contrast to Bartet's fixed connotations of queenliness and respectability:

Réjane était peuple, au fond, et n'excellait vraiment que dans la prose. Mais la sobre élégance et la demi-teinte aristocratique de Mme Bartet sont en réalité plus uniformes et repa^{ra}issent dans tous ses rôles. Réjane était plus variée, et elle avait plus de foyer, plus de rayonnement et, comme on dit en argot de coulisses, plus d'abat^{age}. 78

Réjane's image of the lively, vital child of Paris reaches out to audiences, in a way that Bartet's signification of the aristocratic, makes her more removed.

Where Bartet is constantly cited for her technical perfection, Réjane is noted for her vitality, energy and passion. 'Admirable de simplicité, de gaminerie, de passion véhém^{ente}, d'attendrissement, de haute^{esse}', wrote Sarcey of her performance as Hélène. 79 Fouquier described her as playing the role 'avec un art très raffiné et dont les savants artifices se dissimulent presque toujours sous l'apparence du naturel', 80 and Duquesnel added his praise for the vitality of her performance in the third act, 'vraiment dramatique et touchante'. 81

Like Bartet, Réjane established a repertoire of modern women in quest of happiness, one of her earliest successes, being Georges de Porte Riche's Amoureuse (1891), remarkable for its novel storyline, which involved a 'revolting' husband with an over possessive wife, whom he advises to take a lover because he is too busy to satisfy her needs and desires. The image of the unhappy amoureuse was encoded in subsequent performance contexts, and Réjane came to typify and objectify, as she did in La douloureuse, the dislocation between the modern woman's desires and society which sought to repress them :

Donnay porte sur la scène des femmes de ce temps et de ce pays : c'est Hélène de La douloureuse, c'est Georgette Lemeunier. Et ce sont les pièces de Lavédan, de Guinon, de Coolus! Et c'est toujours Réjane! Héroïnes souvent égarées, suivant leur ardeur plutôt que le strict devoir, aventureuses et sincères, spontanées et propres, meutries et trouvant encore des mots d'esprit, supérieures à leurs joies et à leurs infortunes, gardant de la tenue en leurs chutes et l'élégance en leurs désespoirs! C'est la psychologie d'une époque. Le masque de Réjane marque une date comme les bustes de Carpeaux nous rappellent d'autres années. 82

In short, Réjane signified the 'modern' mask, rather than the 'antique' guise, in



Réjane

a face whose irregular beauty registered the tragedies of the happiness quest.

The popular Parisian actress came into her own in London seasons, and English responses to Réjane and the révoltée drama, typify the way in which a star actress might compensate for a play, such as Amoureuse, for example, which English tastes found 'repulsive' or 'exceptionally disagreeable'.⁸³

When Réjane brought La douloureuse to the lyric in the summer of 1897, it was her performance that generated critical interest rather than Donnay, or his play. Her popularity resided in her 'queer personal charm',⁸⁴ which seduced her audiences into overlooking the connotations of the 'low-lifer' that her earlier role as Madame Sans Gêne had encoded in her image. As Shaw describes :

The old allurements, including the vulgarities of Sans-Gêne without any of the momentary delicacies and dignities which have occasionally redeemed the trivial side of her repertory in the eyes of audiences who know how to appreciate the comparative selfrespect of English actresses of her rank, are in full play throughout. Their repetition would become intolerable if it were possible to dislike Réjane.⁸⁵

As Shaw did not share the general prejudices of middle class morality, one suspects his view to reflect a minority opinion. However, Kate Terry Gielgud, always ready to pick up on semes of disreputability, echoes Shaw's sentiments :

Madame Réjane was a revelation to me who had only seen her previously as the lowborn 'Madame Sans-Gêne', a far coarser piece of work. Last night, her suggestion of being a bit underbred was ever so slight, the woman's character was built up and revealed in an infinity of delicate, refined touches. There was a wealth of detail, of intelligent observation, of worldly knowledge and of technical knowledge too. The woman is not beautiful but she can act, can embody a living typical woman, with a big heart and a great capacity for suffering and make her love and her suffering intelligible, sympathetic to her audiences. ⁸⁶

Both reviews indicate that it is Réjane's performance rather than the play which is on trial; that she has learnt how to charm her English audiences into a sympathetic and admiring response, and how to use the most harrowing moments of her victim-women roles to her best advantage. All this, despite the outcry against a play considered 'more brutally outspoken' and 'cynically suggestive', than any to date on the English stage. ⁸⁷

The year of 1897, which saw the productions of La vassale and La douloureuse, was a rich year for révoltée drama. Amongst the many other plays, there are two more productions which merit consideration, namely, Eugène Brieux's Les trois filles de M. Dupont, played at the Gymnase in October 1897, and Emma Gad's Préludes, given at the Menus Plaisirs, June 1897. As Brieux's plays are a dominant feature of this third section, he requires a brief introductory note.

One time editor of the Nouvelliste paper, Brieux's work as a dramatist becomes increasingly well known in the 1890's. His intention as a dramatist, was to use the medium of theatre to instruct audiences in contemporary morals and codes of behaviour; in any sphere of society with which he found fault. He aimed to engender disquiet and discomfort in the mind of the spectator, necessitating a re-thinking of established values in western society. His attacks ranged from the legal system (La robe rouge, 1900), political corruption (L'engrenage, 1894), inefficiency of bourgeois charity concerns for the poor (Les bienfaiteurs, 1896), to the fanaticism of religious 'cures' and the need for a faith (La foi, 1909). Within this spread of topics are several which relate to women, including the problems posed by the marriage institution, prostitution, abortion and the difficulty for women to obtain employment, to all of which further detailed reference will be made throughout this third section. Writing concurrently, Hervieu and Brieux⁸⁸ shared reputations as advocates of reform,⁸⁹ though Brieux's reformist policies were more wideranging than Hervieu's, both in terms of issues discussed and in moving away from aristocratic circles of passionate intrigue.

Les trois filles de M. Dupont is important in terms of the present discussion of révoltée drama, because it exposes the abuse of women (and men) in the middle class marriage market. M. Dupont faces the difficulty of marrying off his third daughter Julie, to Antonin Mairaut. Both Antonin and Julie are typical victims of the bourgeois marriage policy, namely, a strategic manoeuvre on the part of the parents to improve their own class position or social status; marriage as a means of social ascension:⁹⁰

Brieux touched the evil at its worst spot in that section of the middle class in

which the need for pecuniary prudence has almost swallowed up every more human feeling. In this most wretched of all classes there is no employment for women except the employment of wife and mother, and no provision for women without employment. The fathers are too poor to provide. The daughter must marry whom she can get : if the first chance, which she dares not refuse, is not that of a man she positively dislikes, she may consider herself fortunate. 91

This is illustrated in the play by the way in which Julie is forced to accept a man that she scarcely knows and is given a time limit of fifteen minutes to make up her mind to the marriage. Her reasoning with her unreasonable father, sums up the predicament of so many young women of her class :

M. Dupont

N'oublie pas que tu n'as pas de dot, ma fille...ou à peu près, et que par le temps qui court, quand on n'a pas de dot, on n'a pas le droit d'être difficile.

Julie

Alors, maintenant, le mariage c'est un mari qu'on achète?

M. Dupont

Dame.

Julie

Et les filles pauvres son condamnées au malheur.

M. Dupont

Ce n'est pas tout à fait exact, mais il est bien évident qu'il y a plus de choix pour celles qui ont un gros sac. 92

Given the conditions of marriage, it is hardly surprising that the institution fails to live up to its fictional idealization, for both men and women. The thrills of romance of which Julie is reading in the opening act of the play are not fulfilled by her marriage to Antonin. As in the case of Mme Bovary, reality does not match up to expectation. Keeping house for her husband and caring for his needs in a loveless match brings no happiness; 'on disait jadis de nous : ménagère ou courtisane. Maintenant, c'est changé le progrès a marché...il faut les deux dans la même femme: ménagère et courtisane' (III.4.p.148).

Ultimately, and rather disappointingly, Julie decides to accept the compromise society has dealt her. She chooses to remain with her husband, having taken stock

of her other options, personified in her two, elder sisters; Angèle the courtisane and Caroline, the lonely, single woman. The unhappiness and compromise of the fourth act drains the impact of the third in which Julie and Antonin achieve a climatic and mutual comprehension of marriage :

Antonin

Tu comprends bien...Depuis que je suis au monde, mes parents m'ont toujours montré que le but de la vie, c'était la richesse.

Julie

Les miens aussi.

Antonin

Partout, j'ai vu qu'on avait d'estime que pour ceux qui parviennent...

Julie

Et le mariage est considéré comme un des moyens de parvenir. (III.14.p.157)

To have ended on this note of realization, leaving the audience to draw its own conclusions, would have created better theatre. In fact, Sarcey writes that in performance, the third act, in which Julie reveals her feminist tendencies, was well received by the audience, 's'est terminé par de longs et unanimes applaudissements', whereas the last act was followed by 'un pessimisme désolant'.⁹³

Julie was played by Mme Dulac and was her most major role to date. Though struggling to reach notes of anger, her charm and 'grâce triste',⁹⁴ won over both audience and critics. Mlle Cécile Claron's performance as the devout Caroline, was a convincing portrait of the gullible spinster 'd'allure presque monastique'.⁹⁵ Most difficult, because of the nature of the role, as Duquesnel explained in Le Gaulois, was the undertaking of the courtisane, Angèle, played by Mlle Andrée Mégard :

Le rôle difficile, dangereux, d'Angèle a été distribué à Mlle Andrée Mégard, dont c'était le début sur une scène de ce genre. Je ne sais qui l'eût mieux joué qu'elle. Avec ses grands yeux calmes, réfléchis, sa beauté distinguée, elle lui a donné l'allure triste, contenue, qui était nécessaire, et l'a fait accepter à force de charme. 96

Whereas the performances of the actresses and of the remainder of the cast were much appreciated, the play itself was criticized for its lack of dramatic action and depressing outlook. Few were won over by watching the 'Misère de la vie bourgeoise',⁹⁷ though of course, it was not Brieux's intention to provide light entertainment, and critical hostility was, in part, an indication that his aim of engendering disquiet and discomfort was successful.

Préludes, by the Danish playwright, Emma Gad, is an exposé of outraged male honour. As a two act play, it begins at a crisis point, as the unhappy Charlotte Helmuth, weary of her ten year marriage, is on the verge of taking a lover. She confides in her sister-in-law, who, acting as a go-between, approaches her brother in the belief that he will show clemency and understanding. His reaction to the notion of adultery is one of outrage and indignation; his proposed method of reparation, not one of clemency but violent revenge. Having ascertained his views, his sister refrains from telling him of Charlotte's plight, leaving the latter at the end of the play between 'un amoureux passionné et un mari indifférent'.

In its demonstration of the violence of the male reaction to the notion of a wife's adultery, the play parallels Hervieu's arguments in L'énigme, though its impact is more striking owing to the dramatic device of using a female raisonneur, who in effect, sanctions the act of adultery as opposed to defending the 'guilty' party after the event.

Whereas Hervieu's play was assured of success, widespread publicity and critical acclaim, given his reputation as a dramatist and the production of the play at the national theatre, with star players, Préludes, staged on a double bill with Mme Daniel Lesueur's Hors du mariage, at a small experimental venue, as part of a season of feminist theatre, was overlooked and forgotten.⁹⁸ Though it had the support of the critic Henri Fouquier, who opened the season, the majority of reviewers would not take the enterprise seriously. Sarcey, who claimed to be thoroughly bored by the evening's programme, which he did not see through to the end, reassured his readers the next morning, that there was nothing to fear from a feminist theatre; 'ne vous épouvantez pas; ce sont les derniers coups de fusil tirés par les théâtres à côté qui battent en retraite'.⁹⁹ Le Gaulois asked if, as the aim of the group

was to present drama by women and men writing about women, the members had to be androgynes?¹⁰⁰ Only Fouquier's support in Le Figaro was forthcoming, reviewing the evening's proceedings in a positive light, including the performances of Mmes Fleurville and Laparcerie in Préludes.¹⁰¹ That women could write as well as men on issues which concerned them, and could master the debating techniques of the pièce à thèse, is evident from the example of Préludes, but hard as it was for up and coming young male dramatists to get a foothold, it was even harder for women to get their work taken seriously.

Given that the objective of the révoltée is to refuse traditional duties and recognize her own desires, it is ironical, that quests for the freedom of self expression and liberation from the marriage institution, should end in unhappiness. A final, brief look at the endings to two last plays, will serve to underline the ideological opposition to the spirit of revolt; to indicate the sexual, economic and political strategies which conspire to maintain the status quo of power and powerlessness.

Donnay's Le torrent, played at the Théâtre Français in May 1899, has all the ingredients of the unfortunate marriage situation. Victim of the mercenary marriage market, Valentine has an arranged marriage which brings her no happiness. She takes a lover and becomes pregnant. She already has two children from her marriage and when it comes to a choice between her lover and her children, she chooses the latter. She reveals the truth to her husband in the hope that he will accept the coming baby into the family and accept an outward show of 'respectability'. Though he, himself, has fathered an illegitimate child, he is unforgiving and turns her away. Having argued, pleaded and lost her case, Valentine commits suicide. The rights and wrongs of her course of action are debated at the end of the play, between the representative of religion, Abbé Bloquin and the secular voice of reason and philosophy, Morin. The Abbé's advocacy of sacrifice and duty provoke an indignant cry from Morin :

Eh bien! moi, je me révolte et je m'indigne : je maintiens que cette femme avait le droit et le devoir de vivre sa vie avec l'homme qu'elle avait choisi. Je n'admets pas la résignation, le renoncement, l'humilité, toutes ces vertus négatives : je n'admets pas une morale d'esclaves et une religion de malades qui font de l'humanité un lamentable troupeau. 102



Mlle Cora Laparcerie, actress in 'Le Théâtre Féministe', 1897; featured on the front cover of Le Théâtre, no. 265, January 1910.

However, an indignant outcry over the double standard of sexual morality is not in itself a solution and Sarcey was quite right when he described Valentine's suicide as a dramatic *dénouement*, but not an answer to the questions surrounding the issue of personal freedom and happiness for women, that the play incompletely tackles.¹⁰³

Critics fought shy of discussing the issue of a wife carrying another man's child. Sarcey claimed he was too embarrassed to discuss the subject, and, predictably, the *Era*'s correspondent, felt that he could not happily report on a play 'which turns upon singularly unseemly points, which are too ugly for discussion in the presence of ladies - and with which, I may add, it is not very easy to deal with in decent print'.¹⁰⁴ Only the 'delicately tender' acting style of Bartet, playing the 'hapless heroine' redeemed his evening.

The French critics agreed that it was Bartet's interpretation which foregrounded grace, charm and a 'pudeur feminine' which successfully put across the complex mixture of the spirit of revolt, plaintive pleading and delicate suffering, notably in the play's ending. Fouquier's comments are of particular interest, as he described the role as a kind of 'Iphigénie bourgeoise', only 'plus douloureuse encore que l'Iphigénie antique, étant plus compliquée, victime résignée, puis révoltée et, enfin, offerte par elle-même en holocauste'.¹⁰⁵ Bartet's tragic style once more encoded her performance of the modern woman's martyred desires.

More painful perhaps than the release of death, is the plight of the descendants of Villier's Elisabeth who, aware of their desires and needs are forced back to hearth and home; 'guilty', punished and reduced to silence. Typical is the ending to Paul Alexis and Giuseppe Giacosa's *La provinciale*, performed at the Vaudeville in October 1893, which depicts an erring Mme Bovary figure of the provinces, returning 'home'. The play concludes with a dumb scene, indicated by the following stage directions :

Berthe, comme reprise par l'habitude, va ramasser la nappe et, - tout naturellement, douce et résignée - place devant la table, la chaise d'enfant leurs deux chaises et commence à mettre le couvert. ¹⁰⁶

The contrition and compromise; the monotony and relinquishing of desire and the

tightening of the family umbilical cord are all signified in this wordless scene; the will to refuse is still-born.

Though English tastes did not willingly embrace the 'ugly', pessimistic world view of naturalist drama, La provinciale escaped severe criticism, as the Era's correspondent was able to dismiss it as nothing more than a 'wishy-washy' piece of would-be realism', whose attempts to document realistic 'details of household management', made but a 'small impression' on the spectators.¹⁰⁷ The play's success was indeed modest, and, as Henri Pessard explained, attracted mainly converted, minority audiences, who espoused realism at the expense of theatrical interest.¹⁰⁸ Though possessing none of Bartet's standing or degree of talent, the young actress, Mlle Marcia Legault, invested her révoltée with a winning combination of passion sorrow and a simplicity which harmonized with the provincial tone and setting.

In conclusion, it is rare in these plays to watch a woman's self-knowledge grow into an ability to defeat male authority.¹⁰⁹ At best there are the Noras and Louises who make their exits but with no indication of their new entrances. Discontented, disillusioned and silenced, the révoltée marks a period of awakening female desires which find no words, place or acceptance in society's codes of social behaviour or conventions of morality. The réveil accompanies so called ameliorations in the legal system, but divorce laws are still far from satisfactory in resolving a woman's desire for freedom as an individual.

As the extent of the legal inadequacies became apparent, they in turn became the butt of social ridicule.¹¹⁰ Husbands also added their voices to the chorus of discontent,¹¹¹ as they recognised that the mythology of Romance and Passion was undercut by a sexual economy based on the buying and selling of marriage partners according to their material worth. When neither party can bear the breakdown of the ideology on which they based their dual existence, then husband and wife transfer their remaining remnants of hope to the roles of father and mother.

Notes to Chapter 9 : 'La Révoltée'

1. The original French word, révoltée, is retained throughout this chapter, being the most apt and succinct term for conveying the idea of the discontented wife figure.
2. English divorce law at this time was based on the 1857 bill, which had granted the possibility of divorce for women in cases of adultery supplemented by desertion or cruelty. Amendments to this bill were made during the 1880's, such as the 'Matrimonial Clauses Act' of 1884, which abolished the sentence of imprisonment imposed on partners of either sex refusing to accede to an order for the restitution of conjugal rights. Yet minor ameliorations in no way aroused the kind of interest that was generated by the French divorce law of 1884, granted in a Catholic country in which divorce had been abolished since the restoration of the monarchy in 1816. In fact, 1884 marked a time of defeat for the English suffrage movement, given the exclusion of women from Gladstone's Reform Bill, which extended the franchise to include the whole of the male population, but omitted any consideration of female suffrage.
Details of French divorce law will be supplied in this chapter. For a summary of English divorce law, see Ray Strachey, The Cause (London : Virago, 1978), pp.222-224.
3. Early dramatic criticism of the period reveals a curious tendency to provide extensive lists of playwrights and plays. See, for example, Clifford H. Bissell's introduction to Les conventions du théâtre bourgeois contemporain en France, 1887-1914 (Paris : Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1930), or, C.E. Young's lists of pro and anti divorce plays in, The Marriage Question in the Modern French Drama, 1850-1911 (Madison, Wisconsin : University of Wisconsin, 1915), chapter, 'Other Contemporary Writers'.
4. This leaves out theatre such as popular comedy; the Vaudeville comedies of Georges Feydeau, for instance, which centred on sexual relations as a comic source, creating complicated, farcical actions around a ménage à trois.
5. La révolte : Oeuvres complètes, volume VII (Paris : Mercure de France, 1925), scene 1, p.23.
6. Originally the play was to have been performed at the Gymnase, then under Montigny's management, but Montigny ultimately declined to undertake the production. Two reasons for this withdrawal are put forward by A.W. Raitt in, The Life of Villiers de l'Isle Adam (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1981), p.95, as being either because Villiers was refusing to make alterations to the play as requested by the manager, or because Montigny had divined that the play would prove 'too harsh and too unusual for his public'.
7. Raitt, *ibid.*, points out that Dumas suspected that the Vaudeville manager, Harmant, could be persuaded to take the play, if Mlle Fargueil added the weight of her popularity to his request, given that the Vaudeville desperately needed a successful production. He further suggests that Fargueil was impressed by the play on account of the part of Elisabeth, which she forecasted would be 'one of the major roles of the modern theatre'. Certainly, it was a type of role that was to play a major part in the development of social drama, and in providing a challenge for the actress. The play itself was later stamped with the hallmark of success, by becoming part of the repertoire of the Comédie Française.
8. Le théâtre contemporain, 1869-70 (Paris : Stock, 1909), p.296.
9. Le Temps, 9 May 1870, p.2.
10. 8 May 1870, p.3.
11. Le National, 9 May 1870, p.1.

12. Le Diable, 7 May 1870, p.4.
13. Le Figaro, 8 May 1870, p.3.
14. Max Daireaux, Villier de l'Isle Adam (Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1936), cites Paul de Saint Victor, who could not understand why, 'au lieu de s'évader pour sauvegarder son idéal, l'héroïne ne l'ait point fait pour rejoindre un amant. La pièce, ramenée alors aux proportions connues de l'adultère, lui fût devenue transparente!' (p.107).
15. Raitt, pp.101-3, offers three explanations for the hostile reception of La révolte, namely, the anti-Parnassian view of audiences (a view to which Villiers was publicly identified as subscribing to); Villier's support of Wagner, again an intensely unpopular figure in the world of music and the arts, and finally, Villier's own reputation as a rebel, revolutionary figure, adding connotative weight to the unease generated by the play's title.
16. Subsequent productions of the play on the French stage were as follows:- Théâtre de l'Odéon, 2 December 1896; Théâtre Antoine, 5 December 1899; Comédie Française, 26 June 1914, and L'Atelier, 6 March 1925.
17. Fortnightly Review, new series, vol 68 (December 1897), 862-874 (p.862).
18. *Ibid*, p.863.
19. Last Theatres, p.247. Beerbohm is wrong when he attributes the translation to Symons. Symons had written a critical essay on Villiers and was also revising Lady Barclay's translation, but it was her version of La révolte which was used on this occasion. The confusion may have arisen because the play was staged with Symons's morality play, The Fools of the World. For further clarification, see the review of the production in the Speaker, April 7 1906, pp.9-10.
20. The same is true of comment on later French productions. The following statement for example, appeared in the review by Le Théâtre, of the 1914 revival :

La révolte, à son heure, fit beaucoup plus de bruit qu'elle n'en fera maintenant. Ce n'est pas qu'elle soit moins bonne en 1914 qu'en 1870; seulement ses hardiesses se sont bien atténuées, tandis que ses défauts n'ont guère bougé' (p.10).
21. Many of the avenues explored by French feminists in the '70's are concerned with employing the 'languages' of current methodologies, such as psychoanalysis, structuralism, or deconstruction, to work towards an understanding of the problems of language and gender. For details see the anthology of New French Feminisms, edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton : Harvester Press, 1981).
22. Genet is a writer frequently cited by French feminists as an example of an author who writes with an awareness of gender. Genet's work is inscribed with a consciousness of his homosexuality which identifies him as belonging to the side of 'female' negativity and 'otherness', relative to the dominant structures of phallo-centrism. For further discussion of Genet and feminist drama, see Helene Keyssar's Feminist Theatre (London, Basingstoke : Macmillan, 1984), pp180-3.
23. Villier's immediate response on the night of the production was a tearful one. Subsequently he wrote a defensive preface to be published with the playtext, also giving thanks to those who had given their support to his work.
24. For biographical details, see Claude Ferval's Paul Hervieu (Paris : Arthème Fayard, 1916).
25. Carlson, The French Stage (1972), p.207.
26. James Huneker, Iconoclasts (London, T. Werner Laurie, [1906]), p.232.

27. Fernand Gregh, reviewing, La course du flambeau, L'Art dramatique et musical (April 1901), 211-214 (p.212).

28. The rapport between a dramatized social class and the class of the audience is an interesting aspect of theatre analysis. Harold Hobson, French Theatre Since 1830 (London : Calder, 1978), p.16, suggests, for example, that in the French theatre of the 1860's, working class audiences were driven out of the theatres by portraying the working classes on stage, to that the 'social standing of audiences rose as the social standing of characters in plays fell'. At the turn of the century, it would appear that the social gap between characters on stage and members of the audience, is closing, as social drama debates, investigates and exposes the middle class values of its middle class audiences. For a discussion of the increasing rapport between the audience and life on stage, see, Jules Bertaut, Paris, 1870-1935 (London : Eyre and Spottiswode, 1936), chapter 8, 'All Paris a Stage'.

29. The definition and criteria for divorce sanction are given in, Michel de Juglart, Leçons de droit civil, tome premier, 3^e volume (Paris : Montchrestien, 1972), as follows :

le divorce est une peine qui frappe un époux coupable; un époux ne peut obtenir le divorce qu'en prouvant les fautes graves de son conjoint; un époux innocent ne peut être contraint au divorce. (p.742)

30. Though not openly stated, it is implied that the child was fathered by Irène's lover, Michel Davernier, her childhood sweetheart, now conveniently deceased.

31. Volume I, II.9.p.198. References are taken from the 1909 collected edition of Hervieu's work, published in four volumes, by Lemerre, Paris. All subsequent references to Hervieu's plays will be given in the text, and quote volume, act, scene and page numbers.

32. Gabriel Marty and Pierre Raynaud, Droit civil, tome 1, 2^e volume (Paris : Sirey, 1967), set out the legal position as follows :

Le mari qui tue sa femme ou le complice de celle-ci pris en flagrant délit d'adultère bénéficie d'une excuse légale atténuante, tandis que la femme meurtrière dans des circonstances analogues ne serait pas excusable du fait de l'adultère du mari. (p.212)

33. Jules Lemaître, Impressions du Théâtre, 10^e série (1898), comments on this unforeseen, but not illogical ending, which required that the beauty of parental sacrifice outweigh the absurdity of relinquishing the 'happiness' of four adults to the one month old romance of a seventeen year old girl and twenty two year old boy (p.110).

34. April 1897, 388-399.

35. Ibid, p.398. What Rageot touches upon here is the animal imagery used to convey the frustration and anger of the révoltée; a source of imagery which Hervieu repeats throughout his work. Bête imagery is a dominant feature of the plays of Dumas fils, notably as he became increasingly obsessed by the idea of the family under attack from the beautiful but diabolical outsider. Hervieu, however, uses it both to express the anger of the révoltée and to express male brutality. For example, in L'énigme (1901), the notion of women as wild animals that need to be tamed is a dominant one. If woman cheats on man then she is, 'une bête impure, c'est d'une chienne du diable qu'il faut abattre, avec le chien qui la suit' (vol II, I.7.p.32). The tone of this play is distinctly brutal, the two husbands hunting and tracking down their wives as they would wild animals, seeing little in them other than 'un animal immonde à détruire'.

When Clarisse in Connais-toi (1909), finally stands up to her overbearing husband, she cries, 'le dressage est votre sport favori. Vous avez voulu dresser mes allures, mes raisonnements, mes convictions, mon naturel' (vol IV, III.5.p.300).

She refuses, like many of Hervieu's révoltées, to be tamed and owned like an animal.

36. Hervieu replied to Sarcey's attack in a letter, from which Sarcey quotes, as follows, in Quarante ans, VIII :

Je n'ai rien tenté, en aucun mot, pour donner raison à l'un de mes personnages contre l'autre. J'ai même veillé avec soin à faire dire à celui-ci tout ce qui me paraissait le justifier, et à celle-là tout ce qui pouvait peut-être la disculper un peu' (p.11).
37. For examples, see Charles-Marc des Granges, 'La femme française d'après la comédie contemporaine', Le Correspondant, 214 (1904), 63-94 (p.77), or Olav K. Lundeborg, 'Ibsen in France', Scandinavian Studies and Notes, 8 (1924-5), 93-107 (p.104).
38. Jacques Copeau, 'Mademoiselle Marthe Brandès', Le Théâtre, no.272 (April 1910), p.14.
39. Le Temps, 30 September 1895, p.2.
40. 29 September 1895, p.3.
41. 29 September 1895, p.3.
42. Le Temps, 22 February 1897, p.2.
43. Le Gaulois, 16 February 1897, p.3.
44. Le Temps, 11 November 1901, p.2.
45. Le Gaulois, 6 November 1901, p.3.
46. Julia Bartet (Paris : Plon, 1938), p.226. . All references are from this edition.
47. Le Figaro, 6 November 1901, p.3.
48. Portraits-Souvenir (1935, reissued, Paris : Grasset, 1977), pp.37-8.
49. 20 February 1897, p.12.
50. 5 October 1895, p.9.
51. Era, 16 November 1901, p.16.
52. See Dubeux (1938), p.162.
53. 23 May 1903, p.17.
54. See the Era, 16 December 1899, p.15.
55. The two other plays were Heard at the Telephone, a translation of Au téléphone, by M.M. de Lorde and Foley, and the Irish Assurance, a curtain-raiser farce, based on the old farce, His Last Legs.
56. J.T. Grein, Dramatic Criticism, 1902-3, pp.221-2.
57. 3 March 1902, p.8.
58. Daily Telegraph, 3 March 1902, p.11.
59. Dramatic Criticism, 1902-3, p.222.
60. Star, 3 March 1902, p.1.

61. Era, 8 March 1902, p.15.
62. The Times, 3 March 1902, p.8. The reviewer for the Pall Mall Gazette, 3 March 1902, also wrote, 'we thought it was Léonore all along, not so much from the nicely balanced clues afforded us by the author, but simply because Miss Lena Ashwell is more associated with erring parts than is Miss Fay Davis' (p.3).
63. More Theatres, pp.443-4.
64. Devoir versus bonheur, was the shorthand commonly used by critics in debates surrounding the 'traditional' versus 'modern' views of women.
65. L'empreinte (Paris : Ollendorff, 1900), I.4.pp.31-33.
66. Le Gaulois, 3 March 1900, p.3.
67. For example, see Fouquier's views in Le Figaro, 3 March 1900, p.4.
68. Larroumet, Le Temps, 5 March 1900, p.3.
69. La vassale (Paris : Ollendorff, 1897), IV.2.p.180.
70. A shorter variant of the last act of the play was used in the original production, but the ultimate departure remained the same.
71. Impressions de théâtre, 10 série, p.198.
72. As in L'empreinte, the dramatic device of opposing the femme traditionnelle with the femme moderne in order to generate sympathy for the latter, is instigated in the dialogues between Louise and her mother-in-law. Mme Deschamps advocates sacrifice and duty; Louise dismisses her as a woman of yesterday, 'grandie par la piété et la vertu', and as a woman of to-day, insists on compensation for her husband's guilt.
73. For further examples of male reactions to this demythologizing, see L'autre by Paul and Victor Margueritte, performed at the Comédie in December 1907, which dramatizes a wife asking her husband for forgiveness after a confession of adultery, but who cannot overcome his sense of her impurity and the shadow of 'l'autre'.
74. Le Temps, 19 July 1897, p.2.
75. Le Figaro, 18 July 1897, p.4.
76. La douloureuse : Théâtre, 5 vols (Paris : Charpentier, 1908-12),II, Act III. s.5.p.249.
77. 'Réjane, par Henry Bidou', collected in Réjane, by Camillo Antona Traversi (Paris : Le Calame, 1930), p.343.
78. 'Réjane, par Paul Souday', in Traversi (1930), p.336.
79. Le Temps, 15 February 1897, p.2.
80. Le Figaro, 13 February 1897, p.4.
81. Le Gaulois, 13 February 1897, p.3.
82. 'Réjane, par Nozière', in Traversi (1930), pp323-4.
83. The Era's vocabulary for describing Amoureuse, 2 May 1891, p.9.
84. Our Theatre in the Nineties, III, Shaw, p.189.
85. Ibid.

86. A Victorian Playgoer, p.59.
87. Theatre, August 1897, p.99.
88. As an indication of the possible interaction between the two, Brieux adapted one of Hervieu's novels for the stage in his 1905, 5 act drama, L'armature.
89. Hervieu and Brieux were both invited to join a committee set up to revise the Civil Code, along with a third dramatist, Prévost. See Armand Kahn, Le théâtre social en France de 1870 à nos jours (Lucerne : Fatio, 1907), p.44.
90. See Theodore Zeldin, France 1848-1945, vol 1 (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1973), chapter 11, 'Marriage and Morals'.
91. G.B. Shaw, preface to Three Plays by Brieux (London : Fiffeld, 1914), p.XLII.
92. Les trois filles de M. Dupont (Paris : Stock, 1900), I.6. pp25-6. Here after referenced in the text.
93. Le Temps, 11 October 1897, p.2.
94. Le Figaro, 9 October 1897, p.4.
95. Le Gaulois, 9 October 1897, p.3.
96. Ibid.
97. This was Duquesnel's proposed subtitle for Brieux's play.
98. The idea of a women's theatre group was the brain-child of playwright, Marya-Chéliga, and its aim was to redress the balance of sexual politics in theatre, by promoting the work of women playwrights. For details of the season and the plays, see my own article, 'Feminism in the French Theatre', New Theatre Quarterly, 2, no.7 (August 1986), 237-242.
99. Le Temps, 28 June 1897, p.2.
100. 26 June 1897, p.3.
101. 26 June 1897, p.4.
102. Théâtre, III, Act IV.s.9.p.308.
103. Le Temps, 8 May 1899, p.2.
104. 13 May 1899, p.13.
105. Le Figaro, 6 May 1896, p.4.
106. La provinciale (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1894), III.10.p.102.
107. 14 October 1893, p.9.
108. Le Gaulois, 7 October 1893, p.2.
109. Hervieu's Connais-toi provides a refreshing example of a wife standing up to her husband and ultimately reversing the positions of authority. A developing self-awareness takes Clarisse from a sense of blind, marital duty to a right to 'la liberté de vouloir'. In a powerful confrontation scene (III.5.) Clarisse breaks down her husband's authority and it is he who pleads for clemency, 'pris de sanglots' like a woman. Though ultimately she does not desert her husband, her 'liberté de vouloir' is not diminished. Whereas in the first act, she had only the 'right' to

remain silent, by the third she has claimed the authority and power to speak out.

110. The complexities of divorce and remarrying became a frequently used subject in popular comedies, such as Sardou's Divorçons, played at the Palais Royal, 1880, which was translated several times for the English stage; Charles Baude de Maurice's Après le divorce (Paris : Stock and Tresse, 1889), or Les surprises du divorce, by Alexandre Bisson and Antony Mars, played at the Vaudeville in 1888. Even the theme of selfsacrifice in favour of the family unit was turned on its head in plays such as Fernand Vandérem's La Victime, played at the Comédie des Champs Elysées, March 1914; an ironic treatment of the victim/child who desires his parents to divorce in order to see their guilt assuaged in the form of plenty of presents!
111. The work of novelist/playwright, Jules Renard, might be cited here, in particular Poil de Carotte (Théâtre Antoine, March 1900) and La bigote (Odéon, October 1909), which depict the long suffering trials of M. Lepic, tied to a wife he does not love and plagued by her obsession for the church and clergymen. Renard argues that marriage is to be suffered, and when Romance and Passion are aroused outside that bond, as in Le plaisir de rompre (Bouffes-Parisiens et Bodinière, March 1897) and Le pain de ménage (Théâtre Figaro, March 1898), they are to be sacrificed by both sexes, though it is generally the woman who must convince the man of 'a dual denial.

Chapter 10 : Motherhood : Refuge or Refusal?

The last chapter elucidated the manner in which a woman's quest for freedom and bonheur was beset by the difficulties and injustices of man-made laws, which sought to keep her chained to hearth and home. Her revolt against the imposed regime of wifely duties was further complicated, if it also involved refusal of the second role assigned to women, viz. motherhood. To refuse the man-made laws of marriage was one thing; to refuse the natural law of mothering, was altogether different. The 'advanced' thinkers of the dramatic world exposed the inequalities and inadequacies of man-made laws, advocated divorce on the grounds of incompatibility between brutish husbands and downtrodden wives, but still paid due homage to the sanctity of motherhood. Yet it did not take the form of blind worship of a natural miracle, rather a critical examination of the abuses to which society subjected motherhood, such as the stigmata of illegitimate motherhood, the dangers of advocating motherhood in the face of poor economic conditions or the inability of women to exercise control over their bodies. It was a natural law that demanded respect, but was, as playwrights of the 'new' illustrated, frequently abused by the money orientated middle classes, as this chapter will indicate, through an examination of key productions in English and French drama, which advanced the motherhood debate.

Hervieu and Brioux, though two of the principal defenders of women's rights and social reform, did not consider divorce appropriate, where it involved the family. This was demonstrated in Hervieu's Le dédale, first performed at the Théâtre Français, December 1903, in which Mme Vilard-Duval has to confront the prospect of her divorced daughter, Marianne, remarrying. She reflects the widespread Catholic view in the country,¹ which opposes marriage 'sans bénédiction religieuse'. As in L'empreinte, the objection of having two living 'husbands' (past and present), is also raised. Mme Vilard-Duval's concern is subsequently validated by her daughter's reawakening of love for her former husband, but 'unmarrying' again is no solution

in this case, as 'la loi interdit de reprendre un ancien époux par le moyen d'un nouveau divorce' (vol III, IV.3.pp.150-1).² The moral to be drawn from all this is that, 'a man and a woman once married are married until death, if there be a child',³ as in this particular case.⁴ For not only did the church favour the protection of the family unit, but the law also stated that whoever had custody of the child, the mother and father both had the right to supervise the child's education and maintenance,⁵ thereby continuing the original family unit. The problems this poses when one partner has married for a second time are well illustrated in Le dédale, as Marianne's husband demands his right to help in the up-bringing of his son, despite the boy now having a new father.⁶

The same argument is advanced in Brieux's Le berceau, first performed at the Comédie Française in 1898, which also dramatizes a second marriage, which reaches a crisis point around the 'cradle' from the first marriage. Brieux's moral point, that it is wrong to divorce where children are concerned, is clearly stated:

La loi avait pu nous déclarer désunis, nous pouvions nous être intérieurement juré l'indifférence et l'oubli; des avoués, des juges, tout le code civil et toutes les lois de la terre avaient pu proclamer que nous étions deux étrangers, ils restait l'enfant et la nature qui ne s'intéresse qu'à l'enfant, la nature qui veut que le père et la mère restent unis pour assurer l'existence de l'enfant pour perpétuer la vie, la nature a repris d'assaut les droits qu'on avait voulu lui enlever, et elle a réuni le père et la mère dans une irrésistible étreinte, parce que cela est juste, parce que cela est nécessaire, parce que si vos magistrats et vos législateurs peuvent séparer deux époux rassemblés seulement par les lois et les serments, leur pouvoir s'arrête lorsqu'un enfant est né. Dans ce cas-là, le divorce est nul : l'enfant, c'est le lien qu'on ne brise pas. Voulez-vous la preuve de ce que je vous dis? voulez-vous que je montre le livre où notre indissoluble union est inscrite? Regardez l'enfant...mon enfant! Regardez sa bouche, c'est la sienne; regardez ses yeux, ce sont les miens. C'est lui qu'il faut tuer si vous voulez que nous ne soyons plus des époux, car c'est lui notre acte de mariage vivant et bien-aimé! Et qu'est-ce que je dis! même si vous le supprimiez, vous n'auriez rien fait encore, parce qu'il nous resterait, à elle et à moi, la communion des larmes et les chaînes bénies du souvenir... 7

The similarity between argument and plot structure in the two plays was further linked by the presence of Bartet who played the combined role of divorced wife and injured mother on both occasions. The dual role is one which invites more sympathy than those previously discussed, because of the connotations of the maternal. It reaffirms the law of motherhood as natural, not man-made.

French critics were unanimous in voicing their praise for Bartet's performance in both productions. In Le berceau, Fouquier cited the best received moments, as those where she was 'plus mère qu femme',⁸ and Sarcey was so moved by the production, that he had to read the play afterwards to make sure that it was as good as he thought and that he was not just the victim of superb acting.⁹ In Le dédale her performance was described as characterised by suffering, passion, resignation and sorrow, and credit was given for the 'pudeur féminine' with which she played the delicate scenes of the third act, in which her love was rekindled for her former husband :

sa tâche était difficile. Elle avait à traduire des sentiments d'ordre exceptionnel et délicat, et à supporter le poids d'une situation effroyablement tendue. Elle en est venue à bout; elle n'a pas faibli; elle a tout exprimé : la pudeur de la délaissée, l'enivrement sensuel de l'épouse reconquise, et l'ivresse de la chute, et le désespoir du réveil, et mille nuances que je tâcherai de vous marquer en détail; et parmi tant d'orages, elle a su garder ce goût de la mesure et cette dignité et cette fierté secrètes qui caractérisent son talent et en sont - si l'ont peut dire - l'essence.¹⁰

The English view of her roles of maternal anguish, documented in the Era, was less enthusiastic, though, in fairness, this had less to do with her performance, and more to do with the plays themselves, whose debate on the social and religious stigma of remarriage after divorce, proved alien to English audiences. Le berceau was described by the Era's correspondent as both disappointing and poor. He paused only to mention the 'pleasing impression' of Mdlle Lara as the sister of charity and Bartet as 'exquisitely touching', concluding that, 'no other name calls for mention'.¹¹ Though 'excellently acted', Le dédale was described as an 'unsatisfactory play', which suffered from the register of anach^{on}istic 'stilted language' used to express 'modern sentiments'.¹²

Significantly, when Bartet brought Hervieu's Le dédale to London in 1908, the arguments focusing on objections to divorce, voiced by church and society were cut,¹³ nevertheless, it was still felt that the play was suitable only for an audience by the Seine, and was not a drama of universal interest.¹⁴ Furthermore, it was widely acknowledged that the production required careful handling in order to avoid the vulgar and risqué :

it is of course a touch-and-go subject; the author might easily be betrayed by his players. One false note, one hint of vulgar sentiment or coarse suggestion, and the whole thing would become intolerable. In other words, it is a play for the Comédie Française and the methods of the Comédie Française, for impeccable tact and the "grand style". 15

In this respect, Bartet's image of respectability was felt to be a decided advantage. However, opinion was divided between those, like Max Beerbohm who thought that technique and respectability were all she had to offer,¹⁶ and those who opined that there was more to her performance than 'academic control'. This latter view is illustrated by the Daily Telegraph's detailed commentary on her acting in the scene in which love for her former husband is rekindled, and secondly in the confrontation with her second husband, as she has to explain that their marriage has been a mistake :

She made the first a hurried, palpitating episode, in which the two agents speak in quick, staccato sentences, and the rapidity of the action hardly gives the spectator time to think any more than it gives the heroine herself opportunity for reflection and self-control. The second was much more deliberate. When the confession of Marianne to Guillaume Le Breuil has to be made, the wretched, shamefaced avowal that she has dishonoured both him and herself by her fatal momentary weakness, Madame Bartet wrung out of the scene every note and accent of misery which it could be made to contain. She wailed and sobbed; her anguish betrayed itself in her most frenzied gestures; at the end she was absolutely hysterical in her wild desire to keep Guillaume back and prevent him from executing his vengeance. It was the nearest approach to abandon which Madame Bartet allowed herself, and the effect on the house was electrical. It is the great merit of a strictly classical and reserved method that when the tardy outburst comes it is relatively all the more overwhelming. 17

Despite reservations about the issues of French divorce law, her representation of maternal anguish was, overall, well received and many would have preferred her to have given the role greater prominence, by playing it at the beginning of her season.¹⁸

Playwright, Henry Bernstein's documentation of the problems surrounding a broken family unit, as described by Hervieu and Brieux, is advanced in his drama, Le bercail, which opened at the Gymnase, 13 December 1904. His argument is consistent with the earlier versions, in so far as it depicts a wife regretting the loss of her first home, and returning to ask for forgiveness and acceptance, which is, very unusually, granted. However, Bernstein has given more thought as to why a woman,

whose honesty, and integrity are never in doubt from the first to last act (indeed, are vouched for, by the deserted husband), should abandon her home and child. An orphaned upbringing and an arranged marriage catalytically precipitate the refuge of motherhood, which does not immediately present itself as the happy escape route the young mother, Eveline, thought it might. Though Bernstein is undoubtedly in favour of founding society's structure on the family unit, his play teaches that this necessitates a maturity in relationships. Like Brieux, he attacks the mercenary marriage market attitudes of the middle classes, and insists on the necessity for both halves of a couple to have breathing or growing space, in order to make a harmonious whole. Hence, forgiveness is possible after the husband has recognized how his wife was stifled by the repression of any intellectual activity, or the cultivation of friendships, and she in turn, having experienced the fraudulent, shallow depths of the demi-monde and lived independently as an actress, is mature enough to want a family, rather than use it as a raison d'être. The play is a form of re-birth, in which the maternal instinct is born again, only when the heroine is allowed to experience life, rather than shut it out. This progression is signified in the setting of the play, which moves from the home of the first act, deserted for the demi-monde of the second, which is nevertheless haunted by a reminder of home in the form of a photograph of Eveline's child, and finally moves to an emotional, 'birth' of the family in the third, signified by the action taking place in the child's bedroom.

The part of Eveline was played by Simone Le Bargy, who was radically different to Bartet in style. If some had reservations about Bartet's lack of 'abandon', others disagreed with Le Bargy's excess of it, and her method of playing 'de toute sa personne et à tous les instants'.¹⁹ Duquesnel confessed he found her performance both tiring and tedious;²⁰ Emmanuel Arène, reviewing for Le Figaro, objected to her manner and gait 'qui, comment dirais-je, laissent vraiment à désirer'.²¹ Of paramount interest is Brisson's description in Le Temps, owing to its detail and elucidation of the way in which Le Bargy both attracted and repulsed her spectators :

Imaginez une créature trépidante, frémissante, peu jolie, mais pire; marchant assez mal sur les planches et par saccades : dépourvue de grâce, du moins de ce qu'il y a de souriant et d'un peu mol dans la grâce féminine; douée en revanche d'une féroce énergie et d'une force têtue...Tout, en elle, est volonté. L'intelligence

lui sort par les yeux; ses nerfs sont à vif: elle les tend contre l'obstacle avec tant de furie qu'elle le brise ou se brise contre lui. Le feu intérieur qui la dévore se communique à sa voix qui devient dure, agressive, anglante, blessante, et égratigne les mots au passage. Son corps a des redressements vipérins. Lorsqu'elle se tord les bras ou que plongée dans un fauteuil, elle secoue avec frénésie sa tête blonde, elle vous donne une inquiétante sensation de folie. Et rien n'est plus curieux à contempler que ce petit monstre impulsif et rageur; et cela vous séduit tout ensemble, vous irrite et vous fatigue. On a envie de crier : Assez! Et l'on ne se lasse pas d'applaudir. 22

The Era's correspondent described her as 'highly interesting', but 'not sympathetic'; a comment which reflects his inability to conceive of sympathy for this 'terrible category of women who believe they are "misunderstood"'.²³ He fails to grasp Bernstein's insistence on dual maturity and does not get beyond a misogynist 'reading', failing to understand why Eveline should leave 'a bluff, good-natured, even tempered man, with whom every sensible woman would have been happy'.

Marrying and having children too young was also the warning issued by Henry Bataille, in Maman Colibri, performed a month before Le bercail (8 November 1904), at the Vaudeville. The Baroness, Irène de Rysbergue, has two grown sons, but is frequently mistaken for their sister. Her children find her youthful image and the label of mother incompatible :

LOUIS. - Au fait, Richard, explique-moi, une bonne fois, pourquoi tu dis toujours mon père, en parlant de monsieur de Rysbergue, et, mamn en parlant de madame de Rysbergue...Faudrait s'entendre. Les poupées qui disent "mamn" disent aussi "papa"...

RICHARD.-(l'interrompant, en riant) - Papæ serait impossible et mère serait drôle, si grave pour maman!...Cela lui irait si mal avec sa frimousse..."Mère!...mère chérie!..." J'aurais presque envie de rire..."Maman", même, sonne trop vieux pour elle...Nous avons ajouté un surnom, Paulot et moi, ces vacances à Trouville, pas, Paulot? tant cela nous semblait ridicule d'appeler sur la plage cette grande jeune femme maman tout court...c'était honteux...on se retournait.

LOUIS. - Comment l'appeliez-vous?

RICHARD. - Colibri. Maman Colibri. 24

Full of a passion for living, but saddled with the company of a staid husband, with more time for his business than his family, Irène's life-force takes root in a love affair with a young friend of her son's. When discovered, Irène rejects appeals to the family honour, the roles of wife and mother, she speaks with that which

is alive, her heart. ^{She is} Forced to leave her home^{and} the affair is then but short lived, and she returns to her eldest son, now married, to be recognized in her role as grandmother.

The play again exposes the hypocrisy of the double standards of sexual morality, as the drama opens with the sons and their friends boasting of their affairs with older, married women; an acceptable pastime on the road to manhood and marriage. Yet a woman, because of her duties as a wife and a mother, can never have the same freedom, as Rysbergue, reflecting on his wife's behaviour, concludes at the close of the play :

La femme n'est pas un être indépendant et libre comme nous, elle est asservie à des lois de nature qu'aucune civilisation n'a encore abolies et n'aboliera jamais. Elle est une succession de fonctions, et absolument contradictoires. Toutes ces fonctions, la société est arrivée à peu près à les concilier, par des époques fixes et observées, de mariage, d'évolution...ça va tant bien que mal ...ça va...Mais qu'il survienne, dans cette évolution une simple erreur de date, de tour, comme il est arrivé à ta mère, dont le coeur ne s'est éveillé qu' à l'été de sa vie, patatras, l'édifice de paix s'écroule! (III.8.p.62)

Motherhood is compared to the state of animals in the wild, giving birth, sacrificing everything for their young and then as this intense instinct passes, finding an emptiness; 'c'est fini la fonction est terminée'. Despite beginning to understand his wife's emotions and conduct, Rysbergue cannot actually go as far as taking her back; the old way of thinking is not yet at an end :

Pour nous, notre passé religieux, des préjugés, de vieilles et adorables coutumes ne peuvent chasser de notre mémoire cette conception de l'épouse pure et chaste, de l'amour unique, fidèle au foyer domestique. On ne porte pas en vain le poids de tant de siècles catholiques. Sans doute, c'est étroit, égoïste, mesquin...mais que veux-tu? J'envie ceux qui sauront un jour se libérer de cette conception et s'affranchir de ce passé. Oui, je pressens une plus mâle et plus juste sagesse qui diminuera d'autant la somme des douleurs courantes, mais nous, on a trop d'attaches... (III.8.pp62-3)

Instead, it is left to the eldest son to take her into his family. The final image, is of her contemplating her 'chapeau de jeune fille', studying her aging complexion in the mirror and accepting her transformation into the role of grandmother.

Reviewers endorsed the opinion that Bataille's drama was audacious and hard

to stomach, though the dramatist's tactic, as Brisson pointed out, was to capture his audience in spite of themselves.²⁵ Mlle Berthe Bady gave an unequal performance as Irène, starting badly and gradually improving as the action advanced. As in the case of *Le Bargy*, reactions to her playing (reputed for its erratic quality) were mixed. Attracting sympathy for the erring mother-figure was difficult and demanded, as Brisson suggested, the delicate touch of an actress of Réjane's calibre. Duquesnel cited Bady's foregrounding of 'authority' as detrimental to enlisting sympathy,²⁶ while *Le Figaro* suggested that her case might have been better pleaded with improved vocal clarity.²⁷

Bataille's play was yet another morsel which proved indigestible to the English palate, the *Era's* reviewer writing of its 'nauseous aftertaste'.²⁸ Parisian audiences proved however, to be attracted 'in spite of themselves', and as Harold Hobson points out, it 'was regarded for many years' as the 'most significant play of the decade'.²⁹

In both *Maman Colibri* and *Le bercail* there is a sense of life coming full circle and though both conclude in scenes of a 'return', they are effected with much thought and mature reflection on the way society has conditioned the wife and mother roles.

Brieux also produced a drama based on the prodigal-mother-figure, *La déserteuse* written in collaboration with Jean Sigaux, and performed at the Odéon in October 1904. In *La déserteuse*, Mme Gabrielle Forjot has a preference for indulging her hobby of opera singing, to the extent that she abandons her husband and daughter to take up a full time career on the stage. Her husband consequently divorces her and remarries his daughter's governess, Hélène. Despite the social prejudices involved in such a misalliance, it is treated sympathetically because of Hélène's maternal love for his daughter. Her steady ways and care of Pascaline are viewed as preferable to the wayward mother, who having abandoned her role, attempts to 'return' by regaining her daughter's affection; the idea of the maternal generated in a figure other than the mother, providing a novel aspect to discussion of the mothering role. Hélène's appreciation of the family is all the greater because she herself is an orphan and used to the solitariness of a single life.



Berthe Bady, featured on the front cover of Le Théâtre, no. 271, April 1910.

The play was moderately well received. Mlle Marcilly as the déserteuse succeeded in the difficult task of keeping audience sympathies on her side. Mlle Even as Hélène was a huge success and on the basis of her performance received several offers of new roles, taking her out of her former obscurity.³⁰ As for Mlle Sylvie as Pascaline, her ingénu role was a thankless task, made all the worse by the profusion of tears she shed from start to finish.

Underlying the criticism of women such as Gabrielle Forjot, is the unwritten law that a mother should sacrifice her own life for that of her child; to give up whatever plans or projects she may harbour out of self-interest, if they are likely to prove harmful to the child's future. Several dramatists however, chose to indicate the dangers involved in such overwhelming, sacrificial instincts. Maurice Donnay's L'autre danger, performed at the Théâtre Français, 22 December 1902, with Bartet as the mother, exemplifies this idea, as it depicts a mother sacrificing her lover in order that he may marry her daughter. The presage of unease and unhappiness as the curtain closes on the tableau of the weeping malheureuse mother, warns of future dangers, precipitated by the course of self-sacrifice.

It is this thesis that Hervieu took as his central argument in La course du flambeau, which opened on 17 April 1901, at the Vaudeville and was acclaimed as his dramatic masterpiece. It establishes a claustrophobic, chain-like reaction of relationships between mothers and daughters and demonstrates the inherent dangers of maternal self-sacrifice, in its 'famille d'Atrides', consisting of the grandmother, Mme Fontenais, her daughter Sabine, and grand-daughter, Marie Jeanne. The play presents two views with regard to the raising of children. The one, voiced by Maravon, Marie Jeanne's future father-in-law, is the linear progression of generations, suggested by the title of the play, in which 'la reconnaissance filiale n'est pas spontanée', and in which one generation sacrifices itself to the next; 'ces gens-là se conforment à la loi qui commence par demander à la mère la chair de sa chair, souvent sa beauté, sa santé, au besoin même sa vie pour en constituer l'enfant' (vol II, I.11.p.157). Sabine, on the other hand, feels that children should naturally be obligated to their parents, but the action of the drama proves her wrong. For her daughter's sake, she gives up her own marriage prospects, only to find ironically that her daughter

is ready to break maternal ties by marrying her suitor, Didier. Subsequently, the bond between the newly weds proves greater than that between mother and daughter, and Mme Fontenais's prediction of the inevitable isolation of the mother-figure, comes fatefully to fruition. Sabine is the link in the linear chain between her mother and her daughter and in her sacrifices for the latter, causes the death of the former; 'pour ma fille, j'ai tué ma mère'.

The overwhelming power of a love which embraces crime and fatally endangers life, caused adverse criticism. The maternal love was understood as a selfish desire on the part of the mother to keep the daughter to herself and her plight was not one which readily generated sympathy :

A propos de La course du flambeau, Faguet écrivit (Journal des Débats, 22 avril 1901) : "Le public, même de roman, permet qu'un père ne soit pas sympathique et ne permet pas qu'une mère ne le soit pas. Quand il voit que Mme de Revel, en réalité n'aime qu'elle-même et que son amour maternel n'est qu'une forme monstrueuse de l'amour-propre, alors, quoique ce soit une vérité, il se cabre parce qu'il n'aime pas qu'une mère soit odieuse; il est furieux contre Mme de Revel quand elle pleure du départ de sa fille, beaucoup plus qu'il ne luit en voulait de tous les crimes du monde commis pour son enfant". Doumic dit de cette même Mme de Revel (Le Théâtre nouveau, p.13: "Nous découvrons que cette mère aimait sa fille surtout pour la douceur de l'avoir à elle, auprès d'elle, et que cet amour passionné n'était donc en fin de compte qu'une forme déguisée de l'égoïsme. 31

However, a role which demanded a display of moving maternal anguish was a possible, powerful vehicle for an actress's talents and Réjane who undertook the part, was able to turn the emotional quality of the role, despite such 'readings' to her advantage, and was enthusiastically applauded by the house and the press.

For those who disliked Hervieu's 'algebraic' plot,³² her performance was the production's only merit. In time it was to be recognized as one of the greatest roles of her stage career. Though new to the role of mother, Larroumet suggested it surpassed 'ses plus belles créations d'amoureuse',³³ and Fouquier, who warmed both to the play's study of 'l'amour maternel' and to Réjane's performance, recorded her maternal début as follows :

Avec le rôle de Sabine, Mme Réjane abordait l'emploi des jeunes mères, cette fois-ci dans une note tragique. Amoureuse avec grâce aux actes suivants, une créature douloureuse, passionnée jusqu'au crime et martyre d'être criminelle, odieuse et plainte. Cette note pathétique n'était pas nouvelle dans le talent si varié de l'artiste; mais

je ne crois pas que jamais elle ait été poussée plus loin et si haut. 34

The scene of her criminal confession drew a lot of critical attention, owing not only to the emotionality with which Réjane played it, but also to the intensified overtones of classical tragedy :

Il n'est pas possible d'entendre, par exemple, le récit du vol, où Réjane a été très belle, sans songer aux récits des tragédies classiques. Les personnages sont moins des individus que des symboles de sentiments, comme dans la tragédie. C'est la grandmère, la mère, la fille. 35

Maternal anguish woven into a connotative mélange of the modern and the classical, heightened or rather uplifted the mother-figure to the higher, tragic plane.

This was of course exemplified by Bartet in her image and repertoire which lent itself more readily to the role of maternal sacrifice than Réjane's, given her renown in the playing of classical tragedy; a world of anguished choice and supreme sacrifice.³⁶ Mme Bartet was eventually to play the role of Sabine herself, in October 1916, at the Comédie Française, though she introduced different dimensions into her interpretation, notably her awareness of Sabine not only as an all consuming mother, but also as a lover, and brought a renewed emphasis to the scenes played opposite Stangy, the man she loves:

Mme Bartet joue le rôle très différemment de Mme Réjane, et c'est une bonne fortune pour l'art qu'un même personnage reçoive deux interprétations: Mme Bartet en montre surtout les délicatesses et les nuances; elle y est surtout douloureuse, nous donnant, de la façon la plus aiguë, l'impression du désarroi où se débat une malheureuse femme aux prises avec des difficultés inextricables. Elle a dit le récit du troisième acte en grande tragédienne. 37

Act three containing the criminal confession, was again the act singled out for special mention, in conjunction with further confirmation of her ability to play in the grand style; 'en grande tragédienne'. For Réjane, her first role as a mother required more work, on the part of the audience as well as the actress, to overcome the plurality of her image - parisienne, gamin, low-lifer, lover and comédienne - and foreground the maternal image and tragic dimension.

In the summer of 1901, Réjane took her role of Sabine to London. On performance of the play, critics agreed that the role was startlingly different to any of her work to date, but acquiesced to the power of her playing, drawing attention to her dramatic scope. Some, like The Times, regretted the absence of the 'Réjanism', the 'Parisianism', of her 'coquettish' roles, and were not altogether happy with this 'monster of self-abnegation'. 'Distrest mothers', it was suggested, did not appeal to English audiences.³⁸ The Era again praised her capacity for change, and if Réjane did not reach the heights of Bartet's classical triumphs in her native theatre, this performance at least established her as a tragédienne with most of the English press :

Hitherto we have known Réjane as comédienne in the English, and comedienne in the French sense of the word. We have known Réjane as ingénue, as character actress, as a woman of the world, and as a woman in whom pathos and mirth are wonderfully blended. To-day, after La course du flambeau, she stands before us a tragedienne of the very first rank, for she has that unique gift which can be best described in the French expression cri du coeur. She embodies the entire theory of tragedy. 39

The Daily Telegraph suggested that if the play had been classical rather than modern, then Réjane would have been a Phaedre or Medea.⁴⁰

Interest again centred on the confession scene with Didier's father; both the Daily Chronicle and the Pall Mall Gazette⁴¹ lighted on this scene as the most thrilling moment in the production. In the Star, Arthur Symonds gave the most detailed and incisive account of Réjane's transformation into the middle class mother-figure :

The piece is really the comedy of a broken heart, and what Réjane has to do is to represent all the stages of this slow process of heartbreak. She does it as only a great artist could do it; but she allows us to see that she is acting, she does it consciously, deliberately, with method. She has forced herself to become bourgeois; she takes upon herself the bourgeois face and appearance, and also the bourgeois soul. The wit and the bewitching vulgarity have gone out of her, and a middle class dignity has taken their place. She shows us the stage picture of a mother marvellously. 42

Hence, Réjane no longer signifies le peuple, but has assumed the mask of the bourgeois.

In all of the reviews, it is Réjane who takes the credit for the production,

rather than Hervieu's play, which is incidental to Réjane's performance and is simply a vehicle for her talent.

In this sample of plays, it is clear that the link between mother and child was understood as a natural law, running deeper than any of the legalities introduced by man. They demonstrate that a woman is not free to make her own way in life, like a man, but is constrained by her mother^{ing} duties. The child is the hostage used to blackmail the mother into relinquishing a life of her own as a woman, an individual, or quite simply as a human being. ^{for wives} Faced with an unhappy marriage, children provide a refuge;⁴³ a life force for women young enough and alive enough to need more than the loveless, mercenary, middle class marriage market affords them. Relinquishing female desires, sacrificing one's life for the next generation are not ways, however, of establishing the basis for mature and successful relationships within the family unit.

The debate in these plays is limited to the dangers of refuge and sacrifice. Performed in the leading French theatres, the Comédie Française, Odéon, Gymnase and Vaudeville, the drama was bound by the policies, conventions and expectations of these houses. Yet it was proving impossible to contain questions of social injustice and policies of reform, within the limits of dramatic and theatrical conventions, which tended to abandon lines of radical thought, in order to fit the conventional, compromised, scène à faire endings, thereby effecting a conservative realignment with the dominant ideology. Discontent with the constraints which the dramatic structure of thesis playwrighting imposed on the discussion of social issues, grew amongst those whose artistic and reformist policies had outgrown current, dramatic formulas. It was in the new, 'experimental' theatres that the more controversial issues were gradually raised.

As many of these took their cue from Antoine's ^{or} prototype Théâtre Libre and espoused the naturalist doctrine, the scientific approach to the study of social behaviour, which this encouraged, invited discussion of taboo topics such as venereal disease, prostitution or abortion. Though many of the social issues tackled by the naturalists covered a wide range of problems, reflecting a reformist policy,

many were directly concerned with aspects of 'The Woman's Question'. Because women were so obviously the victims of society's laws, conventions and prejudices, they epitomized the conflict between the individual and society. It was therefore in these 'new' theatres that the more radical arguments appertaining to the refusal of motherhood were debated.

Antoine's Théâtre Libre, receptive to naturalist innovations, experimental influences and the 'slice of life' drama, as opposed to the well-made play, also advocated the staging of foreign drama. His first major success in this respect (a success which also promoted the reputation of the Théâtre Libre) was his world première of Tolstoy's La puissance des ténèbres, given on 10 February 1888, which despite the Czar's interest and sympathy, had been refused performance in Russia. Citation of this production is pertinent to the motherhood debate, given that it contains both an antipathetic mother-figure (Matriona) and an early example of infanticide. The murder of an unwanted infant, in order that the young mother might conceal her 'misdemeanour' and earn respectable status by marriage, is presented in the general pattern of dark, evil, debauched and criminal, Russian, peasant life, depicted by Tolstoy.

The forecast for the play was failure. The three major French dramatists, Augier, Dumas fils and Sardou predicted an adverse reaction, owing to the antipathy of characters, events and a sense of the play's unperformability. Criticism from the national press partially fulfilled their predictions. Sarcey dismissed it as a 'melodrame assez vulgaire';⁴⁴ Vitu as a 'fable puissante, mais révoltante et grossière'.⁴⁵ However, the play was enthusiastically received by a 'converted' and cultural élite.⁴⁶ Melchior de Vogüé, a keen promoter of Russian literature, wrote encouragingly on the production in the Revue des Deux Mondes,⁴⁷ commenting in particular on the naturalist style of acting, setting and costume, though he conceded the difficulties of translation, and also felt that the variant that Tolstoy offered for the murder of the baby, which placed the action off-stage, ought to have been used.

The force of evil in the play is concentrated in the mother-figure, Matriona, goaded into crime by her lust for money and ambition for her son. Worried by the personification of motherhood as an evil force, Antoine's supporters encouraged

him to engage a professional actress for the part (contrary to the Théâtre Libre's amateur policy), in order that the talents of a famous and gifted actress might overcome its antipathy. The popular tragedienne who had made Zola's Ventre de Paris a success, Marie Laurent, was to have taken this difficult part. However, Marie Laurent walked out on the production, after difficult and stormy rehearsals, an antagonism deliberately instigated, it is suggested, by Antoine, in order to reinstate his amateur policy to the full. The part was then taken on by the amateur actress, Mlle Barny, who^{was} to become a frequent performer at the Théâtre Libre, and to follow Antoine's subsequent fortunes at the Théâtre Antoine and Odéon. Affinities with Marie Laurent are suggested in Adolphe Thalasso's brief, biographical description, as he describes her as 'une comédienne "vériste" qui a longuement "pioché" le naturel, et qui a mis de "la vie" dans tous ses personnage. - Au physique, "une Marie Laurent" vue par le gros bout de la lorgnette'.⁴⁸ Pessard also described her in less than flattering terms as a ' coquine terrifiante', 'avec ses faux airs de Marie Laurent'.⁴⁹ Mlle Barny did not therefore attract the attention of a star performer, and the company was given credit for its acting, rather than individuals. De Vogüé praised the women in general for their apt spirit of passive resignation, 'l'abandon fataliste des payasannes russes', though expressed concern for the 'spectatrices' in copying with 'certains détails révoltants'.⁵⁰

In England, The Power of Darkness, translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude, was given a private performance by the Stage Society, in December 1904. As in the case of Antoine's production, it suited the English press to dismiss this 'brutal medley of covetousness and murder, of lust, infanticide, and superstition',⁵¹ as the depraved interests of a theatrical élite. Described generally as 'disgusting' and 'nauseous', with a strong objection to listening to 'the crack-cracking of the murdered infant's bones',⁵² few were taken with Tolstoy's study of peasant behaviour, observed, as one critic described it, like a 'scientist watching through a microscope'.⁵³ Max Beerbohm, however, who in the main, took issue with the literal tenor of the translation, which destroyed the 'spirit' of the original, claimed that it was not the Stage Society who should be blushing for their production, but the critics, who^{were} disgusted and sickened by the drama, nevertheless, proceeded to describe it

in graphic detail to their public.⁵⁴

As to the performances, the part of Matriona was played by Miss Dolores Drummond, and though the Westminster Gazette described her as 'commonplace enough' in the role of a 'creature' the reviewer considered the vilest to date on the stage,⁵⁵ Beerbohm suggested she was 'too graceful in utterance and gesture' for the character.⁵⁶ May Harvey got through two acts of the play as Anisya and then fainted, so that the role was taken over by Miss Italia Conti, 'who played her part without rehearsal, script in hand, yet rose full-high to every dramatic opportunity'.⁵⁷

Going back to the May of 1893, news columns were then reporting on the case of a gas stoker's wife, whose actions, having recently indicated a state of derangement, culminated in her throwing her baby out of a window.⁵⁸ The incident roughly coincided with another dramatic representation of infanticide, but one harder to stomach than the real event, because there were no grounds for arguing a state of diminished responsibility. Alan's Wife, performed by Grein's subscription, Independent Theatre, on 28 April and 2 May 1893, was adapted and translated from a story by a Swedish authoress, Ellin Ameen. Though the authorship of the English, dramatic version of infanticide ^{at first} remained anonymous, it ^{was} clear that its staging ^{had} ^{been} instigated by the efforts and interests, both of the critic William Archer, who wrote an introduction to the published playtext,⁵⁹ defending it against the critics and against Mr A.B. Walkley's criticism in particular, and of Elizabeth Robins, who took the part of 'Alan's Wife', Jean.

As a 'study in 3 scenes' rather than acts, after the 'slice of life' approach of Antoine's theatre, the play opens, with Jean contemplating the forthcoming birth of her healthy baby, a happy reverie, broken by the tragic news of her husband's fatal accident at work. One disaster gives way to another, as Jean gives birth to a crippled son. After considering the probability of the child's inability to survive in a cruel world, Jean suffocates her baby, which she justifies in the final, third scene, as an act of mercy.

^{The play is} set in the present day, in a village in the north of England, ^{where} the roles of the sexes are well delineated, the woman being tied to the home; her husband's vassal, as indicated in the play's genitive title. Yet for both sexes, physical strength,

as opposed to strength of mind, is vital to a person's survival in a tough world.

Horror that a mother should prove capable of murdering her child is registered in the male voices of authority; representatives of the Church and Justice. The female voice is silenced. In the playtext, Jean's thoughts are written down, but it is indicated that in a performance context, they are not to be voiced :

Mrs Holroyd. Honey, tell his worship how you came to do it. Tell him you hadn't your wits right; that you didn't know what you were doing to the little bairn!

Jean. (Silent) I knew well enough.

Mrs Holroyd. Oh, my dear, if you could tell him something that would make them let you off - ...

Jean. (Silent - stares vacantly into space) I can tell him nothing. 60

It is not until her death sentence is passed that she breaks her silence to accept her destiny. Her silence is therefore her argument against men who are not mothers and cannot grasp the agony and pain in choosing to kill a child, as a merciful release. She acts as she does, because she cares as a mother, but is punished by men's laws. Her non-verbalized acceptance of punishment is not an admission of guilt, but an expression of her desire for death, which as Archer suggests,⁶¹ is her only possible destiny.

The baptism scene reminded some critics of Hardy's Tess,⁶² though Archer stresses that the baptism scene, having been taken from the original, Swedish text, was published long before Hardy's Tess. What is interesting, however, is the way in which connotative cross reference of the unfortunate mother-figure was 'read' into the role, powerfully played by Elizabeth Robins. It is clear from reviews, that Robins was able to inject a note of high tragedy into the production. The Daily Chronicle found it difficult to speak too highly of her performance,⁶³ and the Era's critic, despite being unable to account for the mother's actions as anything but 'those of a monster', wrote :

The scene of the murder is nevertheless awesome; Miss Elizabeth Robins rose to a fine height of tragic expression in the child murder scene, and thrilled her audience by the intensity and poignancy of her acting; and, in the last division of the piece, her stony indifference and dumb show were deeply impressive. 64

The Theatre's reviewer suggested that her stage presence commanded the suspension of horror and a belief in the 'reasonableness' of her actions :

For precision, for richness of colouring, for haunting naturalness, this remarkable actress has long been celebrated; but nothing she has done can be compared with her heartrending Jean. Not even the fact that the murder seemed the direct result of logical reasoning, arrived at in defiance of the dictates of affection and the impulse of a mother, could interfere with the actress's supremacy. While she was on the stage, it was impossible to call in question the reasonableness of her action, and the impression created by the piece, a very extraordinary and ineffaceable impression, was almost solely due to her inspired performance. 65

Her ability to reach the ennobling heights of the tragic plane, works towards the image of the antique, anguished, mother-figure, and is clearly not in the realms of 'puerperal mania', as The Times implied.⁶⁶ Yet neither the fineness of her performance, nor Archer's defence of the play as treating the subject, 'delicately, tenderly, humanely, without any of that savage and cynical pessimism which pervades the works of the Théâtre Libre playwrights',⁶⁷ could dispel the general, critical, misreading of the play as 'a sketch of artisan life done in the darkest colours',⁶⁸ or A.B. Walkley's assertion that 'this play ought never to have been written'.⁶⁹

A three act, French version of the play, Une mère, translated from Mme Allin Ameen's Swedish text, was performed at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, in the January repertoire of plays in 1896. In his account, Lugné Poe, director of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, a major avant garde experimental theatre, with a reputation for producing foreign drama, recalls that it was his friend Prozor, responsible for the play's translation, who discovered the play.⁷⁰ A detailed account of the drama is given by Jules Lemaître,⁷¹ and it clearly parallels the English version in its emphasis on 'le goût de l'athlétisme'. Lemaître puts forward a typical anti-euthanasia argument; his dislike of the piece augmented by its emphasis on pagan strength rather than on a christian understanding of maternal love, so that, overall, in his view, 'cette perversion de l'amour maternel', had no redeeming qualities.

In this version, the characters reverted to their Swedish names, and the part of Emma Olson (Alan's wife) was played by Mlle Mellot, (Hermant's Marceline in L'empreinte). Fouquier gave her a brief but positive mention, in what he described

as a 'messe noire'.⁷² Sarcey was more critical, both of the actress, whom he could hardly hear and the play which was so badly scripted in his opinion, that it was too ridiculous to be called a dark drama.⁷³

Brieux opened up a different debate on the 'perversion de l'amour maternel', in his hard hitting drama, Les remplaçantes performed by Antoine's company at the Théâtre Antoine, 15 February 1901. This play illustrates how the sale of mother's milk was a lucrative source of income for the mothers from the provinces who became paid nurses to wealthy, middle class, Parisian families. In the opening act, M. François carries out the placement of mothers in families, like a pimp finding clients for a prostitute, and the drama proceeds to illustrate how greed for money encourages widespread corruption in order to advance business. Certificates, it is stated, are forged, maintaining that a mother has fed her own baby for the legally required seven months, when she might only have nursed him for a couple of weeks. With their women away in Paris, the husbands wait idly in the provinces, living off the wages sent home by their wives, squandering them on drink and debauched living. Hence, for the sake of money, the health of the mother, the children and the life of the family suffer irrevocably.

Middle class mothers are also criticized in the play for neglecting their babies in favour of their social calendars. While pregnancy for those in the provinces is 'un gagne pain', pregnancy in Paris is now 'un hasard malheureux'. Dr Richon, the spokesman for Brieux's ideas, explains how provincial mothers also fed the abandoned babies kept by the 'Assistance publique', many of whom were infected by venereal disease, which the nurses then transmitted to their own children and the children they wet nursed, as well as infecting themselves. The reform Richon (Brieux) proposes is that 'l'allaitement maternel' should be established as 'le service militaire des femmes', with the state offering relief to poor mothers.

Reviewing the production, critics credited Antoine's all round company for ensuring that the production was a piece of theatre, as well as a moral lesson. Despite the 'ensemble' policy, reviewers tended to focus their attention on Suzanne Desprès, as Lazarette, the key remplaçante, remarking on her intelligent and appropriate



Suzanne Desprès in Les remplaçantes

rendition of emotional display,⁷⁴ and her realistic, vocal characterization of the peasant woman, accustomed to making herself heard out of doors.⁷⁵

A further 'perversion de l'amour maternel' in the dominant, male view, was (and still is, to a large extent), the practice of abortion. Despite the anti-abortion view maintained by the church, women in nineteenth-century France, practised abortion as a form of birth control. In the first half of the century, abortion was thought to be the recourse of the widow or unmarried mother, whereas by the second half, abortion had become the married woman's 'back up' method of birth control. This was particularly true for the working classes, who could not afford the sheath, the form of birth control used by the middle classes.⁷⁶

With popular opinion, governed by the legal and religious institutions, weighted against abortion, to present a pro-abortion argument as Brioux did in his drama, Maternité, performed on 9 Decmber 1903, also at the Théâtre Antoine, was a courageous and laudable attack on society's conspiracy to silence the need for a woman's control over her body.

Maternité focuses on the Brignac household, in which the narrow-minded bourgeois husband keeps his wife in a constant state of pregnancy. He has no regard for his wife's poor health or their lack of economic advantages, incompatible with the raising of a large family. When it is discovered that his wife's younger, unmarried, sister, Annette, is pregnant, he refuses to share in a sympathetic view of her plight and consequently his wife demonstrates female solidarity by leaving him, to take care of her sister. The third act is a court scene in which an abortionist and her clients are on trial, subsequent to Annette's death, caused by her final desperate attempt to rid herself of the child.

As in Les remplaçantes, Brioux's argument is in fact based on a respect for motherhood; a respect which he feels society fails to maintain. What he condemns are the hypocrisy and injustice of laws which leave men free to go on seducing and abandoning women, while women are left to bear the consequences and fruits of male promiscuity; a line of reasoning set out in the lawyer's opening speech of the trial scene:

C'est qu'en n'admettant pas la recherche de la paternité, en ne considérant pas comme respectable toute maternité quelle qu'en soit l'origine, la Société s'est enlevé le droit de condamner un crime rendu excusable par l'hypocrisie des mœurs et l'indifférence des lois. 77

Respect for all motherhood, regardless of society's rulings of legitimacy or illegitimacy is Brioux's demand. Likewise, he protests about the national policy of encouraging large families, irrespective of social conditions. The subject is largely debated in act two of the play, where it is introduced as an after dinner topic. A collection of male, local dignitaries discuss the birth rate question, until finally, Mme Lucie Brignac breaks out in exasperation; 'mais enfin, elle nous intéresse aussi, il me semble! Je vois qu'on consulte tout le monde, les législateurs et les financiers. Il n'y a que les femmes à qui l'on ne demande pas leur avis' (II.1.p.127). Lucie's own life has been nothing but a series of pregnancies, owing to the wishes of her self-centred husband, who considers carrying out the national policy to the full, as a means of furthering his advancement in local administration. When he confronts his wife with her ignorance of his work sphere, from which in any case she is disbarred by virtue of her sex, she gently reminds him that her ignorance is scarcely surprising given that in four years of marriage, she has conceived three children.

The play's finest act is undoubtedly its last, in which the trial of the faiseuse d'ange and her clients, serves as a vehicle for revealing facts and figures of poor economic conditions and social prejudices. In the case of the school teacher and Mme Tupin, on trial for seeking abortions, economic circumstances are cited in their defence. Accurate details of a working class income are quoted to prove that even rigorous economies are insufficient to maintain large families. Such arguments crush the religious grounds against abortion, put forward by the president of the court and indicate the sheer absurdity of state policy in advocating re-population. The act culminates in a crescendoed outburst against the injustice of the law and accusations against,

- ceux qui, pendant que nos enfants crèvent de faim nous conseillent d'en faire d'autres. (III.1.p.221)
- Le coupable, c'est le séducteur, et c'est l'hypocrisie sociale. (III.1.p.221)
- Les coupables, ce sont les hommes, les hommes! tous les hommes! (II.1.p.227)

The final note is one of accusation against those not on trial, rather than the deflated note of the condemnation of the 'guilty'. It is society which is really on trial in the courtroom, and society which loses.

The press approved of Brioux's latest crusade, but found it hard to accept as theatre. Brisson suggested it required time to adjust to this new kind of theatre, with its special pleading, its barrage of rapidly fired images and shadowy characters.⁷⁸ Some, of course, objected to the subject matter, though Antoine records in his memoirs of the Théâtre Antoine, that the majority were nevertheless won over by the power of the third act and the talents of the actresses taking the two main female parts; Lucie, played by Mme Rolly and Annette, interpreted by Mlle Jeanne Lion. His entry for the final dress rehearsal reads as follows :

Très belle représentation. La presse, d'assez mauvaise humeur, ne parvient pas à dissimuler l'énorme effet du troisième acte où Rolly surprend tout le monde par la puissance de son jeu. Jeanne Lion est également excellente dans un rôle bien périlleux. L'acte de la Cour d'assises, bien mis en scène emporte tout. 79

Pockets of discontent remained, such as the displeasure voiced by the Era, whose Paris correspondent thought the third act was more of 'an uproarious political meeting' than the 'proceedings in a court of justice'. However, this was to be expected from a reviewer who began his report by openly declaring the drama a treatise rather than a play 'in the accepted sense of the word'.⁸⁰ Most were inclined to agree with Antoine on the high quality of the players; Mme Jeanne Rolly demonstrating 'beaucoup de vigueur et d'émotion',⁸¹ Mlle Jeanne Lion portraying 'une indignation sincère'.⁸²

Brioux later rewrote the play⁸³ and as the second version is even more hard hitting than the first, it is worth considering some of the amendments.

In the second version, the number of female characters and their troubles are increased and extended to include a nurse for the Brignac children and a second sister, Madeleine. In act two, the women have a scene together (scene 7) with no men present, in which they pool their grievances against the male population. They each have their own story to tell, after which, all four women 'pleurent

silenceusement', a touching moment; a grieving, poignant silence and a statement of female solidarity, born of the male engendered misfortunes inflicted on their sex.

Brignac is an even bigger brute of a husband, given that he is now presented as a victim of the evils of alcohol and more violently disposed towards his wife. Brioux introduces a particularly violent scene between husband and wife, in which Lucie is raped by her husband. Refusing to comply with her husband's drunken embraces, Lucie arouses his anger :

BRIGNAC

Tu oublies qu je suis plus fort que toi.
(une lutte. Des cris sourds. Des râles.)

LUCIE (à bout de forces.)

Je ne peux plus! Je ne peux plus!

(Il la dépose sur un fauteil. Il va ouvrir la porté de la chambre à coucher et tourne le bouton de la lumière électrique. Le lit apparaît éclatant dans la blancheur des draps. Brignac s'approche de sa femme.)

LUCIE (folle de terreur)

L'homme des cavernes! L'homme des cavernes!

(Il la saisit. Elle jette un cri et s'évanouit. Il l'emporte vers la chambre du fond.) 84

In the trial scene of this version, she refers to this incident, though the idea of a husband raping his wife is viewed by the court as preposterous and inconceivable. Lucie realizes that it is useless to argue against the power of the law which shields men like her husband, who are to blame for the fate of women like Annette, and cries out in an anguished, final speech, indicating a stronger and more outspoken view than in the original, where she is silenced and overcome by emotion :

Eh bien! ayez donc le courage de dire alors que la femme, dans le mariage d'aujourd'hui est une esclave que l'homme peut abaisser au rôle d'instrument de plaisir! Ayez donc le courage de dire qu'il peut, selon son caprice, la laisser stérile ou la rendre féconde, c'est-à-dire compromettre ou son bonheur, ou sa vie, ou sa santé, et engager tout son avenir sans avoir à lui donner plus de raisons qu'on n'en fournit à un animal domestique que l'on mène au mâle! Si cela est, c'est bien, mais dites-le! dites-le, dites-le pour qu'au moins les jeunes filles sachent

quel marché les fiancés leur proposent, avec l'amour pour amorce et la loi pour complice. 85

This second version of the play is therefore a finer representation of women's arguments for control of their bodies, respect for motherhood, and condemnation of the irresponsible, male seducer. In particular, the rape scene, thrown into relief against the grieving unison of unhappy women, is a striking condemnation of patriarchal injustice.

An English translation of the original version of the play was made by Charlotte Shaw. The urgency in translating Maternité, which she describes in her introduction to the play,⁸⁶ implies that re-evaluation of women and abortion was equally pertinent to English laws and social prejudice, which also failed to recognize the economic necessity of abortion and viewed it blindly as a threat to the family unit. Patricia Knight in her study, 'Women and Abortion in Victorian and Edwardian England', confirms that, as in France, the church, society and doctors, all refused to understand that abortions frequently carried out by women with large families, were done so, not out of 'frivolity' but 'economic necessity'.⁸⁷ Abortion had been outlawed in 1803 and legislation tightened up by the 'Offences against the Person Act', 1861, but the practice still continued, and prosecution of abortionists only usually came about if a woman died or became seriously ill as a result of the operation.⁸⁸

The translation of Brioux's play was given three consecutive performances by the Stage Society at the King's Hall, beginning on 8 April 1906. Again, Brioux's social propaganda proved indigestible to the conservative press. The Times suggested he rename his characters 'after the fashion of medieval Moralities',⁸⁹ and like the Daily Telegraph,⁹⁰ would not forgive his lecturing, preaching and lack of entertainment. The Era, as if still in the dark ages, found it 'a subject which it is disgraceful to talk about in the presence of ladies', completely ignoring or missing the point, that it is a subject on which women from all walks of life needed far more knowledge about, and that the time for the coyness demonstrated by the euphemistic phrasing of 'the birth of the child is prevented by surgical means', is over.⁹¹ Likewise, the Pall Mall Gazette voiced its outraged sensibilities :

The production was a mistake, and we do not see who it to get any credit out of it. Certainly not M. Brioux, who has created nothing, either in the way of characters, or ideas, and seems to have simply swept together all the information he could collect on delicate subjects, which information he retails with an egregious want of tact, of taste, and of good sense. 92

At least the Era did have some praise for the acting of the piece; for Suzanne Sheldon as Lucie Brignac, displaying 'admirable intelligence' and looking 'the part thoroughly well', and for Miss Muriel Ashwynne, who 'put deep and poignant intensity into her pathetic performance as Annette'.⁹³ The reviewer for the Daily Chronicle was pleasantly surprised by Suzanne Sheldon's portrait of a mother and found her 'a good deal more pleasing than the part itself',⁹⁴ and the Star added its praise for the 'depth of feeling' she displayed without in any way 'descending to shallow sentimentality or mawkishness'.⁹⁵ Miss Italia Conti also took part in this production, and the Westminster Gazette gave her a special mention for her 'quiet, strong, little picture' of the schoolmistress on trial, as well as ^{citing} Clare Greet, for her outburst as the abortionist, described as 'quite striking'.⁹⁶

One of the major obstacles blocking dramatic representation of the less appetising aspects of life, was theatrical censorship. In England, the connotations and aims of the 'new', 'free' theatres, had as much to do with breaking free from the Lord Chamberlain's censorship, as artistic and social reform. Censorship continued to endorse the titillation and amorous exploits of popular theatre, but refused to licence the 'realistic' and socially aware exploration of sexual relations. The problem is summarized by Shaw, commenting on the 'incidents of sex' in two plays licenced for West End theatres:

by depending wholly on the coarse humors and the physical fascination of sex, they comply with all the formulable requirements of the Censorship, whereas plays in which these humors and fascinations are discarded, and the social problems created by sex seriously faced and dealt with, inevitably ignore the official formula and are suppressed. 97

When, therefore, in 1907, Harley Granville Barker applied for a licence to perform his play Waste, at the repertory, Court Theatre - a play, which in addition to political issues, describes the brief affair between M.P. Henry Trebell and married woman, Amy O'Connell, resulting in her pregnancy, abortion and death - the drama was

accordingly, but not surprisingly, refused a licence, on the grounds of its reference to an 'illegal operation'. A licence would only be granted if all explicit references to the sexual relations and the unmentionable crime against life were removed, thereby making nonsense of the drama. So the play became a lobbying piece, not for a pro-abortion campaign, but for the abolition of dramatic censorship.⁹⁸ Barker had to be satisfied with a private performance by the Stage Society (24 November 1907), in which himself took the part of Henry Trebell,⁹⁹ and Miss Aimée de Burgh played Amy, followed by a public reading, with the offending passages left out, for copyright purposes. This took place at the Savoy, 28 January 1908, with Charlotte Shaw reading the part of the unfortunate Mrs O'Connell.¹⁰⁰

Like Brioux, Barker wrote another version of his play in 1926, finally performed in 1936 at the Westminster Theatre. Only recently has an attempt to reappraise Barker's work taken place, including a London revival of Waste, in January 1985, at the Lyric, with Judi Dench as Amy O'Connell. As an actress generally associated with comedy, audience dislocation of role expectation was mirrored in her own unease in the part. Dressed in a lurid black and red gown in her opening scene, she provided a stark contrast to the drab, sombre shades of the world of politics; a solitary Cleopatra adrift in a world of Caesars. It poses the question in the 1980's, however, of how far conservative views retain their stranglehold, when the woman who 'falls' from her pedestal, is at once denoted as whore/prostitute by the colouring of her costume, before the argument of the play has even begun.

To summarize, it may be seen that where the role of mother is questioned in the drama examined, it stirs up a hornet's nest of male hypocrisy and social prejudice. It points to the dangers for women in squashing their thwarted desires, aspirations and dreams, into the mythical recompense of this one role. As women begin to demand control over their bodies, to refuse the state of mothering, it is understood as an unnatural and possibly criminal rejection of their fundamental, natural role in life and above all as a major threat to the reproduction of the family unit as a basis of society.

Notes to Chapter 10 : Motherhood Refuge or Refusal?

1. The supposition that Catholicism geographically split France into areas for and against divorce is dispelled by the statistics of Hervé le Bras and Emmanuel Todd, L'Invention de la France (Paris : Collection Pluriel, Livre de Poche, 1981), p.155. They illustrate graphically that though the Catholic south remained unaffected by divorce, in the northern and eastern Catholic areas, divorce was commonly practised. Similarly the central non-Catholic region contradictorily showed little enthusiasm for divorce.
Hence, there were in fact more contradictions and complications involved in the divorce issue, than allowed for in the black and white, pro and anti dramatic representations of the dissolution of marriage.
2. For legislation details, see Dalloz, Jurisprudence Générale, 1884, part 4, article 295, L. 27 July.
3. James Huneker, Iconoclasts, p.213.
4. Despite the number of objections raised against divorce where children are involved, the 1901 census, Compte Général de l'Administration de la Justice Civile Commerciale, part 3, table XV, p.45, shows that a greater number of couples with children obtained a divorce or séparation de corps, than those without; a total of 7,842 with children, as opposed to 5,259, without.
5. See Dalloz, July 1884, Article 303.
6. Hervieu makes this point again in Connais-toi, where Doncières debates whether or not to take back his unfaithful wife, or to press on for divorce. He voices the worries that have come to fruition in Le dédale; 'je me méfie d'avoir en moi des faiblesses, des lâchetés par lesquelles je sentirais plus tard que je suis toujours relié à ma femme' (vol IV, I.6.p.215). Again, this is the suggestion that the original bond between a man and a wife is stronger than any subsequent link.
7. Le berceau (Paris : Stock, 1902), III.4.p.98. Brieux dramatized this thesis again in his later play, Suzette, performed at the Vaudeville, September 1909.
8. Le Figaro, 20 December 1898, p.4.
9. Le Temps, 26 December 1898, p.1.
10. Brisson, Le Temps, 21 December 1903, p.2.
11. 24 December 1898, p.13.
12. Era, 26 December 1903, p.13.
13. The Times, 26 May 1908, p.13, suggests that, 'this is an advantage for people who have to catch suburban trains; but rather hard on the author, whose chain of logic is so complete as to be seriously affected by the dropping of a single link'.
14. Pall Mall Gazette, 26 May 1908, p.4.
15. The Times, 26 May 1908, p.13.
16. Last Theatres, p.372.
17. 26 May 1908, p.12.
18. See the reviews in the Star, 26 May 1908, p.1, and the Westminster Gazette, 26 May 1908, p.2.

19. L'Humanité, 14 December 1904, p.2.
20. Le Gaulois, 14 December 1904, p.3.
21. 14 December 1904, p.4.
22. 19 December 1904, p.1.
23. 17 December 1904, p.11.
24. Maman Colibri : Comédies (Paris : Arthème Fayard, n.d.), I.2.p.10. Subsequent references are given in the text.
25. Le Temps, 14 November 1904, p.1.
26. Le Gaulois, 9 November 1904, p.3.
27. 9 November 1904, p.4.
28. 12 November 1904, p.17.
29. French Theatre Since 1830 (1978), p.57.
30. See Brisson, Le Temps, 24 October 1904, p.1.
31. Clifford H. Bissell, Les conventions du théâtre bourgeois contemporain en France (1930), p.112.
32. Duquesnel, Le Gaulois, 18 April 1901, p.3.
33. Le Temps, 24 April 1901, p.3.
34. Le Figaro, 18 April 1901, p.4.
35. Fernand Gregh, L'Art dramatique et musical, 17 April 1901, 211-214 (p.214).
36. The point is further underlined by the following description of Bartet in L'autre danger, quoted from Dubeux's biography (1938) :

Au dernier acte, sans cesser une seconde d'être une femme de notre temps, une Parisienne du vingtième siècle, elle garde autant de poésie, et elle nous émeut autant qu'une des grandes héroïnes de l'Antiquité. Car le secret de la Divine est d'ennoblir tout ce qu'elle touche. Quand elle apprend que Madeleine aime Freydières, quand elle se déchire elle-même et s'arrache le cœur pour sauver sa fille, le sacrifice d'Antigone ou d'Andromaque n'a rien de plus touchant que cet agenouillement devant l'enfant, ce pardon muet du mal que lui fait l'innocente Madeleine, ce sourire de crucifiée. (pp.242-3)
37. Extract from a review by René Doumic, quoted by Dubeux (1938), p.346.
38. Despite the adverse criticisms of the type of maternal love depicted in La course du flambeau, this 'distress mother' role did not affect French audiences in the same way. Jules Renard, in his comments on the play, collected in Théâtre complet (Paris : Gallimard, 1959), pp.387-8, cites the suitability of the play for Réjane's 'Matinées pour jeunes filles', describing it as one of the few contemporary plays 'qui peuvent le moins troubler un cœur de vierge'. For mothers and daughters in 1907, the play proved compelling, matinée viewing, the mothers apparently being even more moved than their daughters.

The antipathetic English view of the type is, however, further confirmed, by the example of the Era's review of L'autre danger, 27 December 1902, where again, maternal self-sacrifice is described as an 'utterly repulsive' subject (p.14), and by the review of La course du flambeau, in The Times, 25 June 1901, p.5, as alluded to in the text.

39. J.T. Grein, Dramatic Criticism, 1900-1, pp.247-8.
40. 25 June 1901, p.10.
41. 25 June 1901, p.6 and 25 June 1901, p.3, respectively.
42. 25 June 1901, p.1.
43. To underline this point, it is worth noting how many of Hervieu's révoltées ultimately take refuge in their children, when they find their happiness quests thwarted by the man-made injustices of the marriage laws. Hervieu's treatment of their struggles is marked by the clear delineation of the wife and mother roles. It is almost as if the révoltées have two voices. The voice of the wife is marked by the defeated tones of degradation and humiliation, on discovery of or second class status. Yet, speaking as a mother, she sees herself in a different light. The maternal spirit gives her power over men, as she savagely defends, the one and only refuge society leaves open to her.
44. Le Temps, 13 February 1883, p.2.
45. Le Figaro, 11 February 1888, p.3.
46. For a collection of review extracts, see Adolphe Thalasso, Le Théâtre Libre (Paris : Mercure de France, 1909), pp.160-3. The adverse predictions of Augier, Dumas fils and Sardou are also quoted by Thalasso, p.159.
47. Volume 86 (15 March, 1888), 426-450.
48. Thalasso (1909), p.145.
49. Le Gaulois, 11 February 1888, p.2.
50. Revue des Deux Mondes, 15 March 1888, p.433.
51. Pall Mall Gazette, 20 December 1904, p.2.
52. The Times, 21 December 1904, p.13.
53. Star, 20 December 1904, p.1.
54. Last Theatres, p.114.
55. 20 December 1904, p.2.
56. Last Theatres, p.116.
57. Ibid.
58. See the Pall Mall Gazette, 2 May 1893, p.5.
59. Published with the text, as the second play in 'The Independent Theatre Series of Plays', edited by J.T. Grein (London : Henry, 1893)
60. Scene 3, p.42 in the 1893 edition.
61. Theatrical World for 1893, p.118.
62. See the Theatre, June 1893, pp.334-5; the Star, 29 April 1893, p.3. and the Pall Mall Gazette, 29 April 1893, p.3.
63. 29 April 1893, p.7.

64. Era, 6 May 1893, p.8.
65. June 1893, pp.334-5. Though an enlightening account of Miss Robins's performance, the reviewer has nevertheless failed to grasp that her interpretation of the part rests on her logic as a mother; the maternal instinct which desires to protect her young against further pain.
66. 1 May 1893, p.4.
67. The Theatrical World for 1893, pp.121-2.
68. The Times, 1 May 1893, p.4.
69. Speaker 6 May 1893, p.512. Exchanges between Walkley and Archer were conducted through May issues of the Speaker.
70. Acrobaties (Paris : Gallimard, 1931), p.145.
71. Impressions de Théâtre, 9 série, pp.85-93.
72. Le Figaro, 8 January 1896, p.4.
73. Le Temps, 13 January 1896, p.1. A brief report on the French production was also given in the Paris column of the Theatre, February 1896, as follows :

There has been nothing else worth noting but a gloomy Swedish piece, Une mère, by Mme Allin Ameen, at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. A deformed child is born. The mother strangles the child to save it from the misery to which its deformity will expose it, and gives herself up to justice - quite an antique mother. (p.106)

Of interest here, is the description, 'antique mother', again connoting the ennobling qualities of the tragic universe.
74. Le Figaro, 18 February 1901, p.4.
75. Le Gaulois, 17 February 1901, p.3.
76. For further details, see 'Abortion in France : Women and the Regulation of Family Size, 1800-1914', Angus McLaren, French Historical Studies, 10, no.3 (Spring 1978), 461-485.
77. Maternité, second edition (Paris : Stock, 1904), III.1.p.179. Subsequent references are given in the text.
78. Le Temps, 14 December 1903, p.2.
79. Mes souvenirs sur l'Odéon et le Théâtre Antoine (1928), p.224.
80. Era, 12 December 1903, p.15.
81. Arène, Le Figaro, 10 December 1903, p.5.
82. Duquesnel, Le Gaulois, 10 December 1903, p.3.
83. Published in Théâtre complet (Paris : Stock, 1922)
84. II. 8. p.332 (1922 edition). The final^{line} refers to a sequence in the first act, in which Lucie talks of wanting to regulate her family, to another new character, a raisonneur, figure, Dr Hourton. The latter, interested in anthropology, tells her of the discovery of the stone age skeletons of a possible husband and wife, from which it can be deduced, by the position of the skeletons, that the husband murdered the wife (I.4). Hence, Lucie's cry of 'l'homme des cavernes'. The

image therefore conveys the idea of centuries of male violence against women.

85. Act III, pp.356-7.
86. Foreward to Three Plays by Brieux (London : A.C. Fifield, 1914). Also in this collection, is a translation of the second version of Maternité, by John Pollock.
87. History Workshop, 4 (Autumn 1977), 57-69.
88. For further details, see Patricia Knight, *ibid*.
89. 10 April 1906, p.4.
90. 10 April 1906, p.4.
91. 14 April 1906, p.19.
92. 10 April 1906, p.10.
93. 14 April 1906, p.19.
94. 10 April 1906, p.9.
95. 10 April 1906, p.1.
96. 10 April 1906, p.2.
97. From the preface to Mrs Warren's Profession : Plays Unpleasant (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1946), p.191.
98. At the same time, Edward Garnett's play, The Breaking Point, which depicts a young, single girl committing suicide because she suspects she is pregnant, was also censored. So angry dramatists set up committees and wrote to the national press as a protest against the censorship.
99. The part was to have been played by Norman McKinnel, but he was under contract to Lena Ashwell at the Kingsway Theatre and she recalled him at the last minute.
100. For modern accounts of the play, see Jan McDonald, The 'New Drama' 1900-1914 (London, Basingstoke : Macmillan, 1986) pp.78-87, and Dennis Kennedy, Granville Barker and the Dream of a Theatre (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.83-98. Both accounts cover details of the censorship battles arising from the ban on the play and Kennedy includes cartoons of the private, Stage Society production and extracts from the reviews.

Chapter 11 : The 'New Woman' at Manchester

From the last two chapters it is evident that the debate on the marital and maternal conditions of women in society was gradually finding a voice in the growing theatres of experiment. One in particular, Manchester's Gaiety Theatre, showed a capacity for 'advanced' thinking in its 'new', realistic, local drama, with an inclination towards issues of reform, which included dramatic representation of 'The Woman Question'.

Miss Annie Horniman¹ was the strong-minded woman managing the Gaiety at the turn of the century. Under her influence, further contribution to the widening representation of women in drama, was made. Though some studies have now considered the implications of the challenge presented by Ibsen's heroines, in terms of image, role and actress,² little attention has been paid to this provincial contribution to the representation of the 'new woman' and its implications for the player. Miss Horniman's theatre has found its place in the history of English repertory theatre but has not been re-evaluated for its contribution to women's issues. An examination of her enterprise and its implications for actresses, their jobs and roles; the production of images and the sexual politics of the theatre, provides a reply to the French theatrical debate on the female plight.

It is not my intention to give a detailed history of the Manchester Theatre,³ and similar contemporaneous ventures, but a brief prefatory note is required to contextualize a discussion of the actresses and the plays.

The policies implemented by Miss Horniman at the Gaiety were heavily influenced by the new 'experimental' theatres. Taking her cue from the acclaimed 1904-07 management of London's Royal Court, by Barker and Vedrenne, Miss Horniman aimed to build a resident company committed to the promotion of young, unknown playwrights, to the development of a naturalist style of acting, the abolition of the star system and the introduction of short runs.

For the players, company policy meant a levelling out in status, reinforced by an absence of star billing on programmes and posters,⁴ a ban on individual



Miss Annie Horniman

curtain calls and the narrowing of the gap between the highest and lowest paid members of the group. Nevertheless, Gaiety audiences still had their favourites, though they learnt to appreciate a player's versatility in playing major and minor roles. In addition, the stability of work⁵ and the excitement of belonging to a vibrant new form of theatre, were compensations for the lower financial and celebrity returns.

Due to its policy of encouraging new playwrights, the Gaiety gradually established a body of local writers, commonly identified as the 'Manchester School'. As Miss Horniman read all the scripts submitted to the theatre, potential women playwrights did not encounter the usual stigma attached to their gender, particularly as Miss Horniman had a strong dislike of sex discrimination.⁶

An important factor in the success of local writers, was the way in which they shared their audience's culture, dialect and social concerns. Unlike the French theatre discussed in this section, which continued to attract middle class audiences, Miss Horniman's theatre brought in the working classes. This was due mainly to her policy of seats at 'popular prices'; a policy which was cited retrospectively as the main reason behind the theatre's ultimate financial collapse. In not creating a theatre for 'dressing up' and pure entertainment⁷ and trying to reach audiences who were not already cultural converts (though the Gaiety did have its share of young, enthusiastic, 'engaged' intellectuals),⁸ ideals clearly conflicted with the financial necessity of filling the theatre, which finally put the permanent company out of business in 1917.

Though Manchester's dramatic output included foreign plays in translation, revivals of classic pieces, and contemporary lyrical drama, it was amongst the new, realistic drama that 'The Woman Question' was represented. Like the French social drama, its main preoccupation was the predicament of women in the middle class marriage market, though its arguments were more diverse and prosaic than the French propensity for emotional revolt and diffused amongst a much wider variety of female types than the révoltée vehicle.

The opening season of 1907 included two plays by female playwrights, which dealt with aspects of women's grievances, namely, Clothes and the Woman and The

Street.

Clothes and the Woman is a light comedy which illustrates how a woman's value is calculated on the strength of her beauty. The play's heroine, Robina, is a literary woman, a 'bachelor girl', nicknamed 'Bobbins', who has spent her life writing of love without ever having experienced it. When her friends instruct her in the 'philosophy of clothes' and she adds beauty to brains, suitors flock to her side. To test their loyalty she resumes her former drab attire and relegates her beautiful costume, hat and wig of curls, to a mannequin's dummy. One by one her suitors fade away, feeling indignant and cheated. She challenges their hypocrisy:

I was the same woman before I began to masquerade. But did any man admire me then - much less love me? I might have had a heart of gold, but what do you care for hearts? You only love with your eyes - you never look beyond the pretty frocks, the rosy cheeks, the shining hair. 9

Eventually only one faithful Romeo remains, whom she agrees to marry, deciding in future, to temper her literary career, with a modicum of interest in dress. Though crudely assembled and compromising in its conclusion, it offers an original exposition of the marketing of female beauty.

The author, Emily Symonds, disguised her sex by use of the male pseudonym, George Paston. The reviewer for the local Daily Dispatch scathingly commented on the use of the pseudonym, which he opined, did not disguise the sex of the dramatist, because there was too much 'feminine intuition' in the play's content for it to have been written by a man.¹⁰ Writing on another of her plays, The Pharisee's Wife, Beer^bohm suggested that using George as a christian name was a sure sign, in the wake of George Sand, et al., of female authorship and characterizes the 'Georgian play' as 'unfeminine in so far that its author has tackled a large subject in a serious spirit' and 'feminine in every other respect'.¹¹ Beerbohm criticizes women's dramatic authorship for its lack of 'fairplay'; for its well-drawn female characters and male 'dummies'. He assumes that the imbalance in the representation of the sexes transgresses a 'fair' distribution of male and female parts and fails to grasp that women in drama

have, in the main, been portrayed by men as 'dummies' for centuries; that concentration on women's issues and roles is an attempt to redress the imbalance created by male stereotyping of women.

Whatever its artistic failings, the play's success ultimately rested on the choice of its principal interpreter, Margaret Halstan. Rex Pogson explains her popularity with Manchester audiences and the aim in engaging her for the part, as the means to ensure the financial success of the preliminary season, even though relying on the popularity of a player contradicted the Gaiety's policy of moving away from the star system (Pogson, p.35).¹² Like Miss Wynne Matthinson as the 'blue stocking' in Elizabeth Robins's Votes for Women, performed in April of the same year, Margaret Halstan also faced the problem of how her own physical beauty conflicted with the nature of the role. 'It is extremely difficult to handicap Miss Halstan in the way that the play suggests', wrote the Manchester Guardian, 'and though she wore goggles and what we were to understand as an unbecoming gown, the slights of her men friends are not convincing and their manners are grotesque even in a farce'.¹³ The purpose of the play in its exposition of the value placed on a woman's beauty is therefore also mirrored in the image of the actress; what price her talent without beauty?

The Street, by Antonia Williams, returns to the somewhat dated question of the definition of a 'pure' woman.¹⁴ The play argues that a woman who has been wronged may in fact find love and happiness with a man who loves her, in full knowledge of that wrong. The case was pleaded by the victim-heroine, Margaret Martin, played by Mona Limerick, off-stage wife of the Gaiety's artistic director and actor, Iden Payne. Her sultry dark looks, vivacity and emotionality of playing, connotatively approximate the révoltée type. The Era lavishly described her performance as 'exceptional as genius itself'.¹⁵ The Daily Dispatch wrote of her 'exceptional talent',¹⁶ and the Manchester Guardian enthused over her emotionality :

of Miss Mona Limerick, in a most difficult and exacting part, one can hardly find adequate praise. The play leapt into life with her sudden apprehension of her sister's danger when the interchange of ideas gave way to the facts of the case. With all manner of subtle modulations she never relaxed the tension. Her outbursts were splendid, and there were pitiful little gusts of vexation that were most moving.¹⁷

Taking the comparatively dull part of the virtuous sister Violet, whose chastity is only superficially threatened, was Hilda Bruce Potter, who, like Marthe Brandès, was frequently cast in secondary roles. However, as^a talented actress from Poel's Elizabethan Stage Society, she did not fall into the trap of equating insipid virtue with dull acting. The third actress involved in the production was Clare Greet who played the part of the selfish, short-sighted, ineffectual mother; a cockney characterization in which she specialized. Like Hilda Bruce Potter and many others in the Manchester company, she came from a background in 'new' theatre, in her case, from Vedrenne-Barker's Court theatre.

Unlike the French révoltée plays which have only one female part worth playing, the 'new drama' at Manchester pluralized the focus of dramatic interest; afforded actresses the opportunity for developing their talents as character actresses, and diversified its roles in an attempt to register the changing images of women.

Diversification in the composition of female roles was one way of undercutting the stereotypical equation of actress with beauty. She needed more than just good looks in playing a wider and more demanding range of roles than the usual passive, statues of beauty. In terms of the acting profession, challenging the stereotype was a way of bettering an actress's prospects. As it stood, an actress, if lucky, could look forward to brief success by virtue of her youth and beauty, followed by an early and penniless retirement. Miss Horniman's policy of a levelling out in economics and celebrity status, was therefore doubly important to actresses. For performers of both sexes, it entailed unusual job security, but for women it also meant the added security of a framework from which to break with the stereotypical image of the actress.

In the autumn season of 1908, Miss Horniman's players, now in their permanent home at the Gaiety, continued to develop their repertory policy. In this season, another actress of 'emotional' powers made an impact on Manchester audiences, namely Miss Darragh, described by Pogson as a 'well-endowed and finely intelligent actress, particularly effective in the portray^al of cultured and sophisticated modern women' (Pogson, p.54). Having impressed audiences as a wife tempted to leave her husband for her lover in The Vale of Content, a translation of Hermann Sudermann's



Above, Mona Limerick. Below, Hilda Bruce Potter.



Die Glucke im Winkel, she went on to play^a wife who succumbs to temptation in the one act, Reaping the Whirlwind, by local writer, Allan Monkhouse. The play echoes Georges de Porto Riche's Amoureuse in its dramatic situation, in which a husband has neglected his wife in favour of his work. When she repents of taking a lover, he is willing to forgive, for, as in the French play, the wife's action has been precipitated by resentment rather than passion. The short piece is given a novel conclusion as the lover shoots himself on the couple's doorstep at the moment of the wife's return. The couple retire to bed with the dead man laid out in their house; a signifier of the haunting presence of l'autre which poses a threat to reconciliation, as examples from the French drama demonstrated. Reviews of the production indicate an appreciation of Miss Darragh's acting and recognition of her particular talent for the role of 'anguished wife'.

The revival of the one act play form was a particular feature of the Gaiety, which clearly deserved more consideration than dismissal as a 'curtain raiser'. After Miss Darragh's successes came a series of five short plays in the first week of October. Amongst these was the first production of Makeshifts by playwright and actress Gertrude Robins, who wrote several one act plays and was also identified with the Manchester School of writers.

Makeshifts is a quiet masterpiece. It brings to the foreground two lonely, spinster sisters; the sort of women that might be êtres figurantes in Brieux's plays, serving as a background moral lesson to women who think marriage is an unhappy lot. Quietly and subtly, the desperate loneliness of two women who have neither beauty nor money to secure homes and families of their own, struggle to hide their disappointments. Pathos blends with comedy as neither sister wishes to be caught 'man-catching', though secretly, it is their mutual aspiration. The two sisters were played by Miss Ada King, who took the part of the elder sister, Caroline, burdened with domestic duties, and by Miss Louise Holbrook, who played Dolly doomed to a life of infant school teaching. Ada King was the most popular character actress at the Gaiety and delighted audiences over the years with her local, comic characterisations. In Makeshifts, she played her part, 'with quiet, dignified pathos and a complete absence of sentimentality'.¹⁸ Pogson described Louise Holbrook's range as

narrower than Ada King's, but points out that 'she was unsurpassed in spinsterish characterisations, particularly those requiring dialect'.¹⁹ In short, an excellent duo for depicting the tragic waste of single women who were bound by the limitations of their sex to domestic drudgery or pedagogic penury.

In the March of the 1909 season, Mona Limerick and Hilda Bruce Potter were again playing along side each other in The Three Barrows, by Miss Horniman's newly unearthed dramatist, Charles McEvoy.²⁰ The pattern of Limerick as heroic victim and Bruce Potter as the centre of far less attractive female interest was repeated. The play, a rather confused study of a lover who courts both an heiress and a penniless country girl and is ultimately caught in the web of riches, was incoherent in its composition and criticism of middle class marriages. Though audiences were confused by its vacillating hero, or rather anti-hero, his hopeless lack of backbone and weakness of character were designed as symptomatic and indicative of the hollowness of bourgeois values. Rustic simplicity and emotional honesty amongst the agricultural classes are contrasted favourably with the emotional dishonesty and hypocrisy of the land-owning middle classes.

The play's saving graces were Mona Limerick's rendition of the penniless Anna, 'by turns a Madonna of the early Italians and the venus of Beardsley',²¹ and Hilda's unsympathetic, small-minded, Clara Ossler; the siren of wealth proving fatal to the call of simple, honest beauty.

Mona Limerick was again to prove the saving grace the following month in Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted, the first dramatic output of Manchester's M.A. Arabian, which satirized the conventions of marriage. In love with a married man, Oscar Eckersley, Christophera (Mona Limerick), compromises herself in a marriage with no hope of success and takes a lover as an outlet, which, as for Abel Hermant's Marceline or Batille's Irène de Rysbergue, proves an even greater disappointment. Oscar's wife then dies, but Christophera now feels unworthy of his love and pressurized by the 'moral', conventional, family forces, is about to return to her husband, when she is presented with more than the French choice between repentant return or social outcast, as Oscar insists on taking her, referring her idiot husband to the divorce courts. Its trespassing of conventional morality and the suggestion that

a woman may have another chance outside of an unhappy marriage or the social degradation of a love affair, is a refreshing one. Mona Limerick excelled in her performance and demonstrated a flair for the tragic. As C.E. Montague's account in the Manchester Guardian stated, she performed,

with a genius that kept the house breathless for every word she had to utter...Miss Limerick's power can bend anything tragic to its own uses; or rather, perhaps, it has a boundless faculty of surrender to the emotion of the tragic character...She conceives the desolation and abasement of Christophera with the fierceness of imaginative energy that the playgoer's mind cannot withstand; anything that matters enormously to the performer matters enormously to the spectator, and whatever Miss Limerick does on the stage she diffuses a sense of its tragic importance, as of a whole sky darkened. 22

A convincing and clear indication of Miss Limerick's power over the emotional sympathies of her audience; the spell binding quality attributed to all outstanding actresses.

On the side of those trespassed against were ranked the talents of Miss Sybil Thorndike, who played the thoroughly middle class Gerturde Eckersley, whose main object in life consisted in the keeping up of social appearances; an undertaking summarized by the Era as a worthy performance 'in one of the acerbous rôles that seem to suit her gifts, and must be accounted one of the emphatic successes of the evening'.²³ Miss Thorndike's talent for 'acerbous rôles' adds testimony to the increasing scope for actresses at Manchester, owing to the structure of the performance and its emphasis on the group rather than the individual. Mona Limerick is not Julia Bartet highlighted by the background shadow of the remainder of the French, national theatre's company, but an actress performing in a composite and concerted group.²⁴

An attempt to draw upon the background of the suffrage movement as a dramatic source, was made in local playwright, Stanley Houghton's Independent Means, performed in August, 1909. Given the attempts to examine modern woman's desire for more than marriage, through drama, it is surprising that the new writers did not turn to it more often as a subject for their plays.

Houghton's comedy is disappointingly conventional, in spite of the title's hint of the contrary. Sidney, the modern woman of ideas, in defiance of the conservative

family she has married into, sets about joining the W.S.P.U. and insists on earning her own living, when the family fortune is lost. Re-alignment with the conservative defence of the family unit is affirmed, however, by ultimate reconciliation between husband and wife and the disclosure of Sidney's pregnancy.

The Manchester Guardian lamented the limited treatment of ideas in the play and the contradictions within its heroine which resulted in the 'imperfect sympathy' of the audience rather than admiration for a 'woman of spirit and character' which she ought to have been.²⁵ The local Daily Dispatch was critical of the play's construction which it described as a 'small bundle of sociological pamphlets done up as a comedy',²⁶ and which consequently minimized its appeal to the politicians in the audience, wishing to jeer at one another.

Sidney Forsyth, the woman of ideas, was played by a newcomer to the Gaiety, Miss Edith Goodall, who interpreted the part with a little too much 'vehemence' for some critics, but nevertheless with the positive hint that she would prove an asset to the company.

Due partly to the erratic foregrounding of the woman of 'independent means' and to the greater renown of Miss Darragh amongst Manchester audiences, it was the latter, in the rôle of Sidney's mother-in-law, who attracted more critical attention and acclaim. The part itself is a more finely developed study of traditional wifely, forbearance, than the delineation of Sidney as a 'new woman'. Drawing upon her reputation and talent for playing the anguished wife, Miss Darragh added a poignant study of a woman's silent suffering in an unhappy marriage, to her successes. She instilled the older Mrs Forsyth with unspoken grievances as powerful as the volubility of the most emotional révoltée from the younger, modern generation :

Her suppressive intensity, her quickness and mobility of mood, the receding background of unspoken trouble that seems to brood in her gestures and intonations, her voice in which tears flow as they never flowed from eyes - all these things are not quite of our dramatic world, but they are very fine for all that. 27

These sad, sombre notes were interspersed with humorous injections from Ada King, in her part as the Forsyth's old and faithful servant; a character piece which she turned into a masterpiece.

Performed with Houghton's Independent Means was the one act play Unemployed by Margaret M. Mack, dismissed by the Daily Dispatch as 'another essay "after Galsworthy"', in which the 'trail of the pamphleteer was horribly obvious'.²⁸ Its bald statement on capitalist inequality between rich and poor, was indeed a crude, oversimplified, socialist tract, which made for poor theatre and poor propaganda. When the Stage Society produced the play in the spring of 1909, Beerbohm suggested that the society's committee had 'fallen into the habit of believing that any play written with a socialistic bias must be a masterpiece'.²⁹ Perhaps, in the case of the Gaiety, Miss Horniman's zeal for establishing new and, where possible, local writers, was not always matched by a talent for authorship. It is indeed curious that some of the new drama at Manchester - a city sympathetic to reformist policies - should have amounted to the semi-rehearsed ideas of plays such as Independent Means, the incompetent socialist satire of J. Sackville Martin's A Question of Property,³⁰ or the ill-conceived, Unemployed; plays which did not succeed either at a political or entertainment level. One understands critical concern for a more serious, competent attitude towards dramatization of the new, though in fairness, this was not to be levelled indiscriminately at the Gaiety's overall output.

More successful was Shaw's one act play, Press Cuttings, which was given its first public performance on 27 September 1909.³¹ Like Houghton's Independent Means, it drew upon the background to the suffrage movement, to create a highly entertaining farce, with a pro-suffrage theme. Pogson describes it as a piece of 'uproarious nonsense', the humour of which was derived from 'the idea of a Prime Minister disguising himself as a Suffragette in order to leave Downing Street in safety', and from the 'satire on men and military matters' (Pogson, p.85). As leaders of the anti-suffrage campaign, Mrs Banger and Lady Corinthia were parts played by Emily Patterson and Edith Goodall, respectively. The Manchester Guardian sympathized with the actresses for taking on roles that were 'hardly actable', but praised them both for essaying them 'valiantly'.³² Ada King as the Irish charwoman had a better, comic role, though despite the laughter she generated, the Manchester Guardian's reviewer felt that her Irish accent was not well done and that 'no one could well have known, from this one performance, that she is an artist of genius'.³³

The new productions of the following 1910-11 season included a full length drama, Chains, by female playwright, Elizabeth Baker. First performed by the Play Actors at the Court Theatre, April 1909 and revived at the Frohman Repertory Theatre, May 1910, it was well received by the Manchester audiences in the May of 1911. Unlike the previously cited semi-successful dramas, Chains is a well-constructed, realistic drama and original in its treatment of the detrimental restrictions imposed by the state of matrimony. The play's originality lies in its demonstration of the way in which marriage may be as constricting for men as well as women; a balance of viewpoints in a woman's drama, that might even have satisfied Beerbohm's criticisms. It avoids the Parisian, high drama, of husbands leaving wives or wives taking lovers, and shows that for men and women who have no economic means to buy themselves out of a humdrum existence, there is little chance of escape.

The play dramatizes the situation of a poorly paid clerk, Charley Wilson who has a constant struggle to make ends meet and support his virtuous but pathetically clinging wife, Lily. The dreariness of his lot is suddenly underlined by his lodger who decides to try and make his fortune in Australia. However, Charley's surge of wanderlust is squashed by the chains of his marriage and in-laws, who misinterpret his longing for new horizons as the intention to desert his wife. The only support comes from his sister-in-law, Maggie, who shares his longing for a greater freedom and in her own way, achieves this by backing out of a marriage of convenience. Charley's last and secret attempt to find a 'brave new world' is dashed by Lily's announcement of her pregnancy, a chain which binds him more tightly than ever to a domestic and clerical destiny.

Edyth Goodall gave another performance as a woman of ideas in the part of Maggie and Miss Hilda Bruce Potter, took the comparatively dull part of Lily, but again infused the role with life and interest, uncommon to studies in insipid virtue, and 'cleverly' captured 'the manner and the humour of an average suburban housewife'.³⁴ Miss Ada King created another delightful character piece in the part of Lily's mother :

Miss Ada King as Mrs Massey was a Gorgon of the highest perfection. The way

she awoke joyless from an uneasy Sunday afternoon sleep in the parlour and glared round, like a bilious basilisk, seeking matter for offence and wrath, convulsed every judicious spectator. 35

In the week following the production of Chains, the first production of P.R. Bennett's one act play, Mary Edwards, was given. Described as demonstrating suffrage and feminist tendencies,³⁶ the play, set in the eighteenth century, sketches the wealthy heiress, Mary Edwards, married to philanthropist, Lord Hamilton, to whom her fortune has been made over. Realizing how he is squandering her money she destroys her marriage lines, the proof required to legalize the deed giving him access to her money, and exits, declaring her intention to live alone with her two sons.

The Manchester Guardian considered it strange that an author should choose to base a play on outdated marriage laws,³⁷ but nevertheless regarded the enterprise as a success. The part of Mary Edwards was played by Irene Rooke with 'clarity', 'serenity' and 'easy mastery of the stage'.³⁸ It was her first season at the Gaiety, which she had joined along with actor, Milton Rosmer, both having come from a repertory background in Glasgow. Now that Mona Limerick made fewer appearances at the Gaiety, owing to poor health, Irene Rooke had opportunities to play the emotional, tragic victims and invited comparisons between the two, by playing the role of Nan in John Masefield's tragedy, which Mona Limerick had made famous.³⁹ She was later to play Pinero's unfortunate woman with a past, Paula Tanqueray, but more immediately pursued 'The Woman Question' and the 'purity' argument, in her role as another Mary, Mary Broome, the title role in Allan Monkhouse's full length drama, of the same name.

Mary Broome is a novel reworking of a familiar situation. A servant becomes pregnant by the young, dilettante son of a wealthy family, but instead of being cast out by the family, is married to her seducer. Unusual in its composition, it also offers a novel part in the role of Mary Broome, which is marked by common-sense rather than the passionate tones of a victim, underlined by the totally impractical nature of her lover and husband to be. Her commonsense prevails through all her misfortunes and when her baby dies, a tragedy she is left to bear on her

own, she leaves her hopeless husband in order to emigrate to Canada with a man of her own kind. At last her husband understands the middle class charade which passes as marriage, and, as in The Three Barrows, it is working class honesty and commonsense which are seen as having value. The dramatic device of highlighting middle class shortcomings by contrast with working class virtues, would no doubt have been popular with the working class Gaiety audiences. A domestic servant's commonsense proving more substantial than the narrow mindedness of her employers, could not have failed to please, though middle class criticism still quibbled over the 'purity' issue. Pogson lights on the way in which critics resented Monkhouse's choice of an 'unmitigated cad' for a hero, pointing out that it is Mary who ought to have been 'read' as the focus of interest (Pogson, p.104). Implicitly this reinforces the prejudicial blindness; a willingness not to see or hear the centrality of the female argument.⁴⁰

Given Mary Broome's plain speaking, the actress has a harder task of winning sympathy, harder, that is, than if she were a weeping, penitent victim. The Era complimented Irene Rooke on having 'realized throughout the simple, half-educated woman, quite passionless and docile, though primed with commonsense';⁴¹ though it is a pity no one thought to comment on the power of a working class heroine who not only marries but also leaves her middle class husband.

Early in the 1912-13 season, Manchester audiences were treated to the most famous production to come out of the Gaiety's work, the Hindle Wakes by Stanley Houghton, which takes issue with the question of a woman's right to sexual freedom. The play opens with parents, Mr and Mrs ^aHwathorn, anxiously awaiting the return from the 'wakes' of their headstrong daughter, Fanny. When it is discovered that Fanny has spent her holiday with a young man, parents on either side insist that the young man make reparation by marriage, despite the inequality of their social backgrounds and the young man's virtual engagement to wealthy heiress, Beatrice Farragh. Fanny, however, refuses, arguing for a woman's right to sexual pleasure outside of marriage.

The play was produced in London in the summer previous to its autumnal Manchester debut and in the capital, controversy over the play's moral issues provided the

chief discussion point. A somewhat patronizing tone creeps into some reviews, such as comments from The Times on the novelty of 'rough-tongued Lancashire ways' for London audiences,⁴² though overall the play was clearly enthusiastically received and at last a play comparable to Brieux's moral incisiveness was having an impact on English audiences. In the London production by the Stage Society at the Aldwych in the June of 1912, Edyth Goodall added the part of Fanny to her 'new woman' repertoire. It was a performance which, when the play was given a West End run at the Playhouse, aroused discussion on the relation between the morals of the actress and her role, of the kind Mrs Patrick Campbell was subject to after her performance as Paula Tanqueray.⁴³ On the revival of the play at the Library Theatre Manchester, in 1958, a '50's review offered a retrospective account of the indignation the play caused, attributing it (albeit somewhat tongue-in-cheek), to the conception of the heroine :

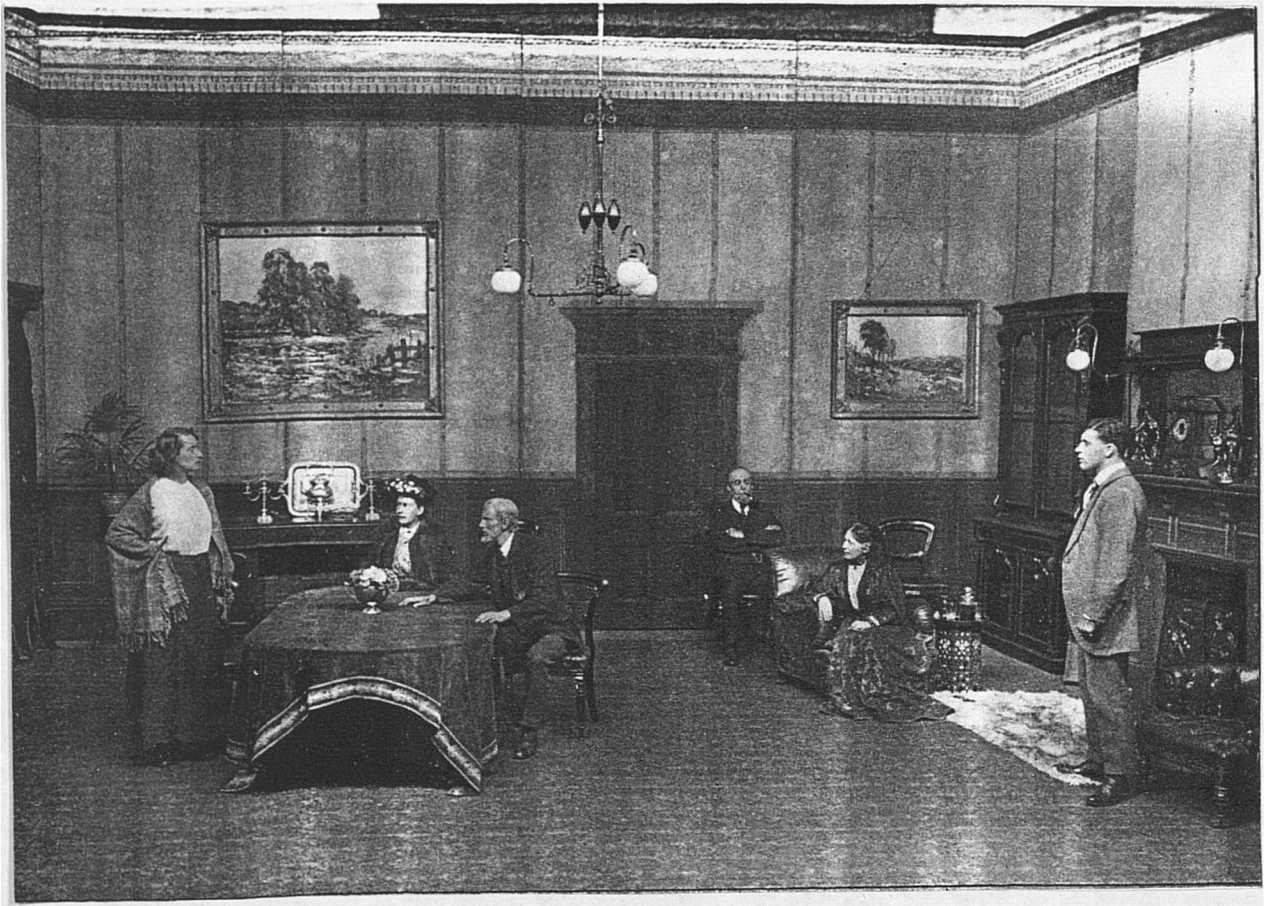
This was a wicked and immoral play which should never have been allowed to soil the stage on which Nell Gwyne was "sweet" and Marguerite Gautier at least atoned by dying of consumption.

Fanny was not sweet and she did not come to a bad end...That was what the public and some of the press could not forgive. 44

As with the conception of Mary Broome, the Manchester style of drama was a movement away from the continental, emotional heroines. It offered a lesson in plainspeaking which was harder to stomach than the 'purity' arguments in exotic disguises.

After such a tumultuous London reception, Gaiety audiences were eager for the play. In the Manchester production, Muriel Pratt, who had understudied the part of Fanny in London, now made it her own. The Manchester Guardian thought her finest moments were those of 'obstinacy and abandon' in the first act and her 'pertness and practical commonsense' of the last.⁴⁵ The Daily Dispatch favoured Ada King's 'vivid actuality' in the part of Mrs Hawthorn and found Muriel Pratt, 'less impressive as Fanny, though still gloriously free of the ordinary tricks of theatre'.⁴⁶

Pogson cites the London production of Hindle Wakes as marking a change and decline in the fortunes of the Gaiety, given the dispersal of players, not only to London,



Hindle Wakes, Act III. Standing on far left is Edyth Goodall as Fanny and seated at the table is Ada King as Mrs Hawthorn.

but also to tours in America and Canada; work which was gradually de-centralizing the focus on Manchester.

In the remainder of the pre-war repertoire, there is little more that is pertinent to the discussion of the representation of women in the 'new drama,' with the exception of the major success later in the 1912-3 season, St. John Ervine's new play, Jane Clegg, which deserves a mention partly because of its subject matter and partly because it would not do to close this section without a more substantial reference to one of the future stars of British theatre and film, Sybil Thorndike.

Jane Clegg is a study of the most unfortunate marriage of Jane to a worthless husband, whose crimes against his family - stealing his firm's money, lack of regard for his children's good name, gambling and adultery - finally give Jane the strength to keep him from her door and to encourage him to join his pregnant mistress, leaving her to care for the children and his burdensome mother. The usual imbalance of power between the patriarch, as head of the family, and the mother as powerless comforter and supporter is reversed by virtue of Jane having money of her own. It is money, the play teaches, which may give a wife and mother the power to leave her marriage and survive without a husband's support. Jane's position at the end of the play is sad but resolute, in contrast to her husband's unchanging weakness and incompetence.

Though in her years at the Gaiety Sybil Thorndike played a variety of parts (in between raising a family with her husband, director-actor, Lewis Casson, who became artistic director at the Gaiety after Payne's departure), she does not figure prominently in this selection of the 'new drama'. Hindle Wakes provided her with the role of the unfortunate fiancée, Beatrice, a rather dull lady of unquestionable and uninteresting virtue, but in Jane Clegg, she had a part which enabled her to give 'what was then considered the finest performance of her career' (Pogson, p.141). The whole of the play centred on her performance as abused wife. 'She never stressed a note unduly', wrote the Manchester Guardian, 'she maintained the type with unfailing fidelity; it would not be easy to recall a piece of acting at the Gaiety more austere⁴⁷ly right in its expression'. The Daily Dispatch had praise for the 'good acting' of the company in general, and aside from Sybil Thorndike, Clare

Greet also got a special mention amongst reviewers, for her performance as the querulous mother who can see no wrong in her miscreant son.⁴⁸

This brief documentation of a sample of the 'new drama' at Manchester, indicates the substantial contribution which Miss Horniman's company made to the dramatic representation of the changing face of women. It demonstrates a movement away from female stereotyping and progression towards a more varied representation of women, creating a wider scope for the actress. Though some of the local drama is erratic in composition, it has a refreshing quality in the insight and new angles it offers into some of the well-trodden arguments on women's issues.

Whereas both the French social drama and the English provincial drama focus on 'The Woman Question' as a source of dramatic and topical interest, they differ radically in their means of expression. In the French plays, the révoltée is the mouthpiece for female grievances - the inadequate divorce laws, double standards of sexual morality, no options for women outside marriage - and is always the grand, passionate woman, whose love of life and capacity for feeling, makes her greater than the world which surrounds her. In English provincial drama, discontent is voiced by everyday, mundane, working class heroines who demonstrate more commonsense than emotionality. Yet, though Fanny Hawthorne, Jane Clegg, or Mary Broome are as prosaic and as superficially unattractive as their names suggest, they are nevertheless women who are changing their lives, refusing the roles of marital unhappiness and inequality, and making their own, alternative routes, to a greater, personal freedom.

Notes to Chapter 11 : The 'New Woman' at Manchester

1. Born in 1860 into the famous tea merchant family, Miss Annie Horniman had both a personality strong enough to resist Victorian female stereotyping and sufficient wealth to propel her in the direction of artistic ventures - her first major contribution being her financing of Yeats's Abbey Theatre in Dublin.
2. For an early view of such implications, see Elizabeth Robins's essay, 'Ibsen and the Actress', Hogarth Essays, series 2, 15 (1928), and for a modern re-assessment see Gay Gibson Cima's 'Discovering Signs : The Emergence of the Critical Actor in Ibsen', Theatre Journal (March 1983), 5-22, and Jan McDonald, 'New Actors for the New Drama', Themes in Drama, 6 (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1984), 121-139.

3. This has been adequately sketched by Rex Pogson in, Miss Horniman and The Gaiety Theatre, Manchester (London : Rockliff, 1952), to which I am indebted as a source of background material for this chapter. All quotations from Pogson refer to this edition.
4. On the posters - a collection of which is housed, along with many of the theatre programmes, at the Manchester Central Library - major lettering was used for the title of the play. Then the author's name appeared in heavy type and the cast list appeared in the smallest print.
5. Miss Horniman offered her players contracts of forty weeks ending on 31 May each year, therefore leaving players free for summer engagements. See Pogson, p.81.
6. An example which confirms Miss Horniman's antipathy towards sex discrimination is her failure in her negotiations for the Gaiety to obtain an excise licence for the sale of alcohol on the premises; a decision she felt certain was made on the basis of her gender and one which therefore 'aroused all her fighting instincts' (Pogson, p.40), as her struggle to finally obtain a licence was to prove.
7. These were the two main reasons for the Gaiety's failure cited by the critic, James Agate, outlined in an article in Manchester's Daily Dispatch, 3 October 1952, located in the Misc. Collection of Horniman News Clippings 1907-78, Manchester Central Library. The Evening Chronicle's interview with actress Dame Sybil Thorndike, a few days later, on her reminiscences of the Gaiety, quotes her opinion of the audiences as 'working people' rather than 'dressy'. This article is also included in the Misc. Collection.
8. Harold Lake's article 'That Audience', Gaiety Theatre Annual: Supplement 1911-12, edited by Henry Austin, pp.23-25, is an amusing outcry against the young, intellectual converts amongst the Gaiety's followers :

I abominate and despise the Gaiety audience. I regard it as the most representative gathering of utterly objectionable people that was ever drawn together outside a vegetarian restaurant...everyone who regards himself or herself as an advanced thinker considers it a duty to go to the Gaiety. As a result, you get within those four walls practically every kind of crank that exists, from the nut-eating Fabian freak to the soulfully spoofing spiritualist. You may be jammed between antivivisection incarnate and a hectic suffragist; you may enter the theatre with a sermon on anti-vaccination attacking one ear and a discussion of the single tax assaulting the other.
9. Clothes and The Woman (London, New York : Samuel French, 1922), Act III, pp55-6.
10. Daily Dispatch, 15 October 1907, p.6.
11. Last Theatres, p.81.
12. Director, Ben Iden Payne in his memoirs, A Life in a Wooden O (Newhaven, London : Yale University Press, 1977), confesses that this, 'was a slight - a very slight - concession to box-office considerations. I made it with many qualms, and subsequently resolved never again to compromise for financial reasons in the least degree' (p.82).

Because of its popularity, it was a play that could be relied on to make up box office losses, though its place in a repertory theatre, that valued artistic rather than commercial merits, was therefore constantly brought into question. (See Pogson, pp.47-8).
13. 15 October 1907, p.9.
14. The play was later used by Edy Craig's women's theatre group, the 'Pioneer

Players', who produced the play at the Little Theatre, 30 November 1913.

15. Era, 9 November 1907, p.14.
16. Daily Dispatch, 6 November 1907, p.4.
17. 6 November 1907, p.7.
18. Manchester Guardian, 6 October 1908, p.11.
19. Pogson, p.58. Pogson also writes of the off-stage rivalry of the two actresses, due to their contrasting temperaments; Ada's silence before going on stage and Louise's anxious pacing and repeating of her part to overcome stage fright.
20. McEvoy's David Ballard had been played at Manchester in the September of 1908 and had established his success.
21. Manchester Guardian, 23 March 1909, p.6. The connotations of a Beardsley femme fatale were attributed to Mona Limerick on more than one occasion; an image undoubtedly promoted by the allure of her dark beauty and on-stage passionate temperament.
22. Manchester Guardian, 27 April 1909, p.6.
23. Era, 1 May 1909, p.13.
24. Some temperaments were clearly unsuited to this way of working, Mona Limerick's in fact being a case in point, as demonstrated by her ultimate persuasion of her husband to leave the Gaiety after four years work there, to form their own company.
25. Manchester Guardian, 31 August 1909, p.6.
26. Daily Dispatch, 31 August 1909, p.4.
27. Manchester Guardian, 31 August 1909, p.6.
28. Daily Dispatch, 31 August 1909, p.4.
29. Last Theatres, p.447.
30. Performed at the Gaiety in October 1908. The play satirizes the socialist who abandons his principles when he comes into property and turns capitalist.
31. The play had been censored because of the barely disguised naming of the prime-minister and general of the army, as Balsquith and Mitchenor, and had only been performed privately at the Royal Court, July 1909. The censor reversed his decision when it was agreed that the names be changed to Johnson and Bones, respectively.
32. 28 September 1909, p.7.
33. Manchester Guardian, *ibid*. Though cast lists and reviewers state clearly that Ada King took this part, Iden Payne in his memoirs (1977), gives a different account as follows :

Among the other characters in Press Cuttings there is an amusing charwoman. As the play was a burlesque, I cast our best male comedian in the part. The reaction to this rather obvious device affords an instance of the change in viewpoint in half a century. The other members of the cast and the actor himself protested at the idea of a man's playing a woman's part. Forgetting that this had been universal practice in the greatest age of English drama, they

alleged that it outraged decency. I pointed out that it was done in pantomimes, but they assured me that was different : pantomimes were not regarded as regular plays. There was a general feeling of relief in the company when my shocking innovation was accepted by the public. (p.101)

Given the evidence of reviewers etc., it is highly unlikely that this role was played by a man on the play's first performance. Whether this was a subsequent innovation or whether, Iden Payne is totally mistaken in his recollection, remains unclear.

34. Manchester Evening News, 2 May 1911.
35. Manchester Guardian, 2 May 1911, p.9.
36. On the play's production in London in June 1912, The Times, 18 June, p.10, described it as 'a work of feminist propagandism rather than of dramatic art'.
37. 9 May 1911, p.6. The Married Women's Property Act passed in England in 1882, had finally offered married women protection for their own money and earnings, breaking down the male myth, that a woman's matrimonial state was sufficient 'protection' in life. For details, see Ray Strachey, The Cause, pp.273-6.
38. Manchester Guardian, 9 May 1911, p.6.
39. First performed at Manchester in May 1909, with Mona Limerick as Nan.
40. Interestingly, when the play was revived for television in the 1950's (Granada production, 3 September 1958), attention was again drawn to the male rather than female characterization. In an account of the television drama, in The Horniman Festival Scrapbook, Manchester Central Library, the reviewer, writing in the wake of Osborne's Look Back in Anger, alludes to the play's demonstration of, 'enough conflict and penurious realism to remind us that to-day's bantering, egotistical, arty-farty, frustrated, angry young man has already been on our stage for nearly 50 years'.
41. 14 October 1911, p.12.
42. The Times, 18 June 1912, p.10.
43. For a summation of the discussions carried on in leading papers, notably the Pall Mall Gazette, see Pogson's chapter, 'Hindle Wakes', pp.125-134.
44. From, 'Hindle with its Edges Softened', by L. du Garde Peach, The Guardian, Manchester, 17 September 1958, collected in the Horniman Festival Scrapbook.
45. 29 October 1912, p.8.
46. 29 October 1912, p.4.
47. 22 April 1913.
48. Daily Dispatch, 22 April 1913, p.4.

Chapter 12 : Outside the Doll's House : A Woman's 'Profession'

Several of the plays studied in this section have indicated the frequently insurmountable problems women faced in moving outside the marital roles of wife and mother; an avenue which it finally remains to examine more fully.

In the case of the images of women reflected in the Manchester drama, women were shown to be working towards 'independent means', by their refusal to accept an unhappy marriage as their only destiny. Yet, achieving a serious, self-supporting lifestyle, unlike Sidney Forsyth's game-like attitude towards temporarily earning her own living, required an enormous effort in overcoming social prejudices and learning to face up to the reality of very poor economic conditions. Though, at the turn of the century, both England and France had large populations of single women without families to give them a 'meaningful' existence, middle class ideology resisted the demythologization of women as predestined, angelic homemakers.

Just as mid-century France had identified the courtisane as an evil antithesis of marital virtue, and Victorian England had painted the prostitute black to the married woman's white, it was inevitable that a third category of women, who were neither of these, should find themselves tarred with the same brush of moral stigma, as their 'alternative' lifestyle was also a threat to the nuclear family.

English and French social drama at the turn of the century, documents the difficulties women encountered in the workplace; difficulties which often, as the drama shows, drove them to the oldest 'profession' for women, as a means of survival.

In the French drama, Brieux was ahead of his contemporaries in tackling the question of women and work. This was due in part, to his dramatic consideration of a wider range of social classes, than, for instance, Hervieu's remnants of aristocracy, who could afford (literally) to contemplate the possibility of divorce.

Brieux embarked on the problems of working women in one of his early plays, in fact his first success, Blanchette, performed at Antoine's Théâtre Libre, 2 February 1892. The play approaches the question via examination of women and education.

The play's heroine, Elise, is a young woman who has been educated beyond her station and as ^a déclassée is trapped between her peasant background and bourgeois education, and is consequently alien to both. When forced to leave home as a result of parental conflict, arising from her lack of employment, she can find no way of using her teaching certificate. Her vertu almost kills her as each post she seeks is accompanied by an entry fee of compliance with male, sexual advances. Elise's education and training does not present her with the opportunity of a profession and an income, as her father had assumed it would. As she explains to him in the final act of the play :

J'étais née pour être servante d'auberge comme ma mère et pour épouser un ouvrier comme tu en es un. Tu m'as fait élever avec des filles de millionnaires. Tu avais tort : ce n'était pas la peine de m'envoyer apprendre à faire la révérence si je devais servir des tasses de café aux cantonniers. 1

With Antoine himself playing the harsh father, the unknown Jeanne Dulac took the part of Elise and Mme Barny as Mme Rousset, Elise's mother, had a more sympathetic maternal role than the one she undertook in La puissance des ténèbres. According to Adolphe Thalasso, she was henceforth commonly known as 'Maman Rousset' or 'la mère de Blanchette'.² Mlle Dulac was warmly praised for her grace, 'nécessaire pour faire excuser et plaindre la sottise de son coeur',³ though some thought that in the third act, she lacked sufficient 'ampleur' and 'élégance' in her portrait of the prodigal daughter.⁴ The play was a much needed triumph for Antoine and a guarantee of Brioux's future success.

Sexual harassment features as a constant obstacle in Brioux's accounts of women's attempts at independent survival. Certain of his contemporaries did follow suit in dramatizing this problem, notably Capus, in his drama, Rosine (Gymnase, June 1897), in which the heroine's opportunities for work are consistently blocked by sexual harassment. However eager a woman is to make her own way, hardship and prejudice are never far from sight, and the pessimistic outlook that Brioux painted in Les trois filles de Monsieur Dupont, depicting the unholy trinity of lonely, selfsupporting spinster, despised prostitute and révoltée, is a depressing summation of the limited options for women.

It is in a much later play, however, that Brieux finally engages in a detailed, propagandist study on behalf of the single, working woman. First staged at the Gymnase on 22 December 1912, Brieux's La femme seule traces the adverse fortunes of Thérèse, a young lady from a well-to-do background, whose wealth is squandered by her banker, forcing her to adapt to impoverished circumstances. Rather than live off her godparents (Thérèse is an orphan) in the provinces, she chooses to remain in Paris and to work for a living. The second act of the play finds her working for a feminist newspaper and highlights the difficulties the middle class woman faces in trying to survive on her own. The social prejudices against women of this class working at all, are very high, unless they are able to assure society of their respectability by association with a 'good' family.⁵ As the landlord for the paper's premises points out, having working, middle class women in his building devalues his property :

J'ai dû convenir qu'un immeuble est dans une certaine mesure déprécié par la présence de gens qui travaillent...Surtout, si ce sont des dames, et, encore plus, si ce sont des dames qui composent des livres ou qui font un journal...et encore plus, lorsque ce journal s'appelle La Femme Libre. 6

The paper itself hardly warrants the title Femme Libre as the bulk of its contents are connected with beauty tips; the main source of interest for the subscribers, without which, the whole enterprise would collapse. The women write for the paper under male names as 'ça inspire encore plus de confiance pour les choses sérieuses', reflecting the common practice of several nineteenth-century women journalists, novelists and playwrights.

As the paper has not been a resounding success, the women are forced to take severe wage cuts and an increase in working hours. They have no means of retaliation and no other place to go. Despite all its brave flutterings, this banner of 'feminism' is a blanket term for female misfits; those women who cannot find another niche in society. Any women who are able to exchange beauty for the economic advantage of male protection, like Mme Chanteuil, who leaves the paper to find a lover, do so. 'Féministes d'occasion', accuses Caroline Legrand, 'Il n'y a de féministes sincères que les femmes laides comme moi ou vieilles comme

Meuriot' (II.9.p.160).

In the struggle for work, the problem of male harassment is presented as a very threatening and insurmountable type of blackmail. Mme Chanteuil describes the disappointment for women, when, after the traumas of job hunting, the possibility of success is dashed at the door, 'barrée par un homme qui vous guette, et dont il faut satisfaire la fantaisie avant de pénétrer dans l'atelier, le bureau ou le magasin' (II.9.p.161). Inevitably Thérèse is forced to leave the paper, rather than give in to the editor's desires and advances, which do not go unnoticed by his jealous wife.

The third act of La femme seule deals with prejudicial attitudes towards women and work amongst the working classes. Thérèse has joined M. Féliat's bookbinding factory⁷ and formed a union for women workers. In this environment, she encounters the bigoted attitude of the working class male, hostile to the intrusion of women in the workplace.⁸ Thérèse's policy is to employ women most in need and to discourage alcoholism and laziness in husbands. When the delegate from Paris arrives to shut down the women's workshop, he refuses to acknowledge that not all women have homes to support them, that some women need work as much as the men. He is blind to the fact that he will be forcing the women into prostitution. 'Il vaut mieux leur donner un métier', explains M. Féliat, 'que de les forcer à prendre un amant. Ne voyez-vous que pour beaucoup de femmes le travail est une libération?' (III.4.p.212). As in Shaw's playwrighting, such statements underline the authorial position and the play's 'purpose', which, if ever in doubt, is reaffirmed by prefatory statements :

We are confronted at the present time by the woman who is anxious to lay by means for her own support irrespective of the protection of her husband. In this play I have indicated the tendency of this difficulty and the consequent troubles which the older civilizations will bring upon themselves when the woman's standing as a worker is generally acknowledged. 9

In order for the play to have its desired impact, Brieux therefore presented as many aspects of the 'troubles' as possible, which brought outrage from the critics over the enormity of Thérèse's problems, as they failed to grasp the principle of

social as opposed to artistic realism.¹⁰ If the play does not offer immediate solutions, this is not an artistic failure but a social reality, and for those who insisted on a positive rather than a gloomy outlook, Thérèse's final speech is at least one of elation as she prophesies a better future for women :

Des temps nouveaux sont venus. Dans tous les pays, les villes, dans les campagnes, chez les pauvres et les demi-pauvres, de chaque foyer déserté pour l'alcool ou laissé vide par ceux qui n'ont pas le courage du mariage, se lèvera une femme qui l'abandonnera et qui viendra s'asseoir à côté de vous, à l'usine, à l'atelier, au bureaux, au comptoir. Vous ne l'aurez pas voulue ménagère, et comme elle ne se voudra courtisane, elle sera l'ouvrière, la concurrente...et la concurrente victorieuse...! (scène dernière, p.240)

The Era's Paris correspondent reported the 'cordial reception' of the play to its English readers.¹¹ The part of Thérèse was played by Mlle Jeanne Provost from the Comédie Française, warmly praised by Jacques Copeau in Le Théâtre, for her 'ardeur contenu, la dignité, la jeunesse et l'émotion. On l'a beaucoup applaudie, notamment au 3^e acte, quand elle repousse avec indignation les propositions du goujat Nérissse'.¹² Brisson was not convinced that she was totally right for the part, but was nevertheless charmed into acquiescence :

Il [Brieux] a confié à Mlle Jeanne Provost le principal rôle de La femme seule, rôle lourd, périlleux, complexe, rôle d'ingénue et de jeune première, exigeant de la force et non pas uniquement de la grâce. Thérèse a l'étoffe d'une organisatrice, d'une conquérante, d'une lutteuse. On sourit à l'idée que Mlle Provost ait pu fonder et diriger un syndicat d'ouvrières. Elle est née pour la poudre et les paniers, pour porter une mouche au coin de la lèvre, manier l'éventail et dire finement la prose de Marivaux. Mais son charme supplée à ce qui lui manque d'autorité. Et dès que ses beaux yeux se mouillent, on ne lui en veut plus'.¹³

In addition to the principal part, there were also the interesting, supporting, female roles, notably in the feminist newspaper setting, which, included Mlle Emilienne Dux, who 'en féministe ulcérée, a trouvé des accents très justes qui ont ému' and Louise Marquet who was cited for her portrait of the professional feminist, delivered 'avec un art très sûr et très mesuré',¹⁴ 'qui a su donner un relief remarquable à la silhouette épisodique de la féministe Caroline Legrand'.¹⁵

Whereas Gymnase audiences welcomed the play and its playwright (now assured



Jeanne Provost as Thérèse

of a respectable aura, given his admission into the ranks of the French Academy) into their traditional home of social drama, English audiences were more critical. The play was performed in England the following December, at the Coronet Theatre as part of the first season of the Women's Theatre Company, set up by the Actresses' Franchise League. The AFL had been formed in December 1908, in order for actresses to pledge their allegiance to the women's cause.¹⁶ Supported by a large majority of London's leading ladies, it increased awareness of sexual politics within theatre- notably the lack of opportunity for women in playwriting, directing and set designing- and to redress the balance, the Women's Theatre Company was formed, with the intention of creating opportunities for women to work in such areas, normally restricted to male domination. Though a breeding ground for the first women's theatre festivals and groups, most of the early theatre associated with the AFL was either ephemeral agit prop improvisation or one act playlets. Hence, the Women's Theatre had to fall back on two full length dramas written by male playwrights for its first productions.¹⁷

Perhaps the women involved were able to console themselves with the fact that the play's translator was Charlotte Shaw. The need for translators had grown considerably at the close and turn of the century,¹⁸ and much of the work was undertaken by the new, well-educated, middle class woman. Nevertheless, the art of translation has always been considered secondary to original, creative work and as such, the number of women working on the translation of dramatic texts, was in fact reinforcing the myth of artistic genius as belonging exclusively to the male writer.

Reporting on the original French production, the English suffrage press were grateful for Brioux's sympathetic attitude towards the women's movement and women's rights, but felt the mood of the play was harmfully pessimistic. The Suffragette printed a translation of Brioux's statements about the play, made originally in Le Matin, which underlined the inadequate education of women who are taught nothing but the 'art of seduction',¹⁹ but in reviewing the play, did not speak favourably of its gloomy outlook, which lead the reviewer to assume that conditions were better for women in England than in France.²⁰

Similarly, when the play was produced in its English version at the Coronet Theatre, twelve months later, suffrage opinion felt it^{was} too pessimistic to be useful propaganda for the feminist cause, and did not reflect the true spirit of the women's movement. 'I wish some woman would write a play, showing the real spirit of the Suffragette', wrote a reviewer. 'It has never been done yet, and I do not believe that a male dramatist will ever do it'.²¹ In fairness to Brieux, the criticisms do not indicate an enormous gulf between the conditions of English and French women, so much as the presence and absence of a women's movement. A unified, militant suffrage movement brought English women the means to express and draw attention to their arguments; it did not bring them overnight reform. Furthermore, the translation of the play does not end with Thérèse's positive statement as to the future of womankind, but with a simple declaration of her intention to return to Paris, thereby concluding on a despondent note, unlike the uplifting tone of the original.²²

The English, national press partially endorsed the feminist criticism, but was impressed by the staging of the drama. The Era commented on the effectiveness of the staging of the strike scene, in which male workers attack the womenfolk;²³ confirmation of the developments in the stage management of large crowd scenes, as had been seen a few years previously in the staging of the suffrage rally, in Elizabeth Robins's Votes for Women. The Daily Chronicle conceded that although,

the stage is not the place to achieve any valuable result by economic argument,... at least this last scene of Woman on Her Own will bring the question of feminine labour in certain industries forcibly before the playgoers' imaginations. It will make those think who never thought before, and that is as much as one can ask an economic drama to do. ²⁴

The role of Thérèse was played by Lena Ashwell, now well known for her interpretations of the modern woman of ideas and one of the leading supporters of the AFL :

Miss Lena Ashwell gains our entire sympathy, if not our entire understanding, as the heroine...Her interpretation of the part is highly moving and beautiful in its intensity, and her emotional ability is irresistibly apparent. ²⁵

Though not agreeing with the conception of Thérèse, the Daily Telegraph nevertheless enjoyed Miss Ashwell's performance :

The burden and heat of the day fell on Miss Lena Ashwell, who played the long, trying and (if the truth be told) rather monotonous part of Thérèse with the most appealing sincerity. If we cannot honestly profess that she won our hearts for the hapless girl, it was no fault of hers. All that grace and tenderness in the actress could give to the character she gave abundantly. Her distress was wholly real, and the final defeat seemed almost intolerably cruel, so vivid was the picture of bowed and broken courage. In the scenes with the futile lover, Miss Ashwell almost makes us like Thérèse as well as pity her by the charm of gentleness and rich humanity which we do not discover in M. Brieux's printed word. 26

Also singled out was Susanne Sheldon in her 'delightfully humorous and crisp' interpretation of the 'plain-faced, plain-speaking, cigarette smoking Caroline Legrand',²⁷ and Cicely Hamilton for her small, but 'beautifully' rendered part of 'an old work woman'.²⁸

The Times was inclined to mockery, suggesting an alternative title for the play as, 'Round the Woman Question in 2½ Hours'.²⁹ Its caricaturing of the actresses in their roles as varieties of men-haters, its sympathy for the poorness of the male parts and condescension towards the 'frantic delight' of its overwhelmingly female audience, demonstrate unease and unwillingness to give serious consideration to a theatrical event organised by women. Likewise, the Star patronizingly described the production as not 'conspicuously brilliant', but 'was quite as well organized as most occasional performances given under the management of men'.³⁰

A final comment from feminist, journalist and writer, Rebecca West, made on the play's publication in the translated volume of three plays in 1916, sums up the English attitude towards Brieux's play :

His thesis is the entirely admirable one that a woman finds it difficult to earn her own living on account of the hostility of her male competitors and the disposition of male employers to exact sexual submission as a price of employment or promotion. But his heroine, Thérèse, although she is unimpeded by a child wrapped in her shawl and there is no snowstorm, has the hard, hard luck of a heroine of melodrama.³¹

Objections to the play are therefore based not so much on what Brieux says, as the manner in which it is said and that manner indicates a contrast in dramatic

tastes. The French have not lost their love of the excess; excess of passion, emotionality and suffering. Brieux may work these national characteristics to his advantage and successfully play on the excessive suffering to promote his reformist policy. English tastes favour the tendency to underplay rather than overstate, which accounts, in part, for the mixed reception of an English drama à la Brieux, by Mrs Lyttelton, Warp and Woof, performed at the Camden Theatre, June 1904.

Like Brieux, Mrs Lyttelton has a point to make; a cause to promote. Her aim was to make a theatrical public aware of the dreadful working conditions of the workgirls who constituted a slave labour force in churning out beautiful dresses for the comfortable rich. Again, using a large cast of women, attention focuses on a particular victim, Theodosia Hemming. After an opening act of lavish splendour and the boorish rich, in the showroom of bullying dressmaker, Mme Stefanie, act two reverses the setting to the drabness of the workroom. A 'surprise' visit from the factory inspector ensues, as Mme Stefanie and her appalling standard of working conditions has been informed upon. Forewarned and forarmed, she disguises the reality but in desperation Theodosia speaks out and is promptly dismissed. The remainder of the play deteriorates into a melodramatic account of Theodosia's virtual recourse to prostitution in order to obtain money for her ill sister, who eventually dies, leaving a final tableau of a kneeling and weeping heroine.

Although the play was widely

attacked for its amateurishness and clumsy style of construction, A.B. Walkley defended it by taking precisely the line required to understand Brieux; by evaluating the statement rather than the way in which the statement is made :

The fact is, Mrs Lyttelton, in a jejune prentice fashion, has attempted to do for a corner of London life what Brieux has done for many corners of France. She sees something wrong, something which outrages her sense of justice, and she would do her best to right the wrong by exposing it before a whole playhouse. 32

Walkley devotes his article on the play to an assessment based on understanding the play as a play with a 'purpose', rather than as a 'work of "disinterested" art'. Only then, Walkley argues, might one qualify the playwright's shortcomings, as her failure to pursue her purpose rigorously enough; to show the social and economic conditions at the base of the workgirl's misfortunes, rather than leaving the audience

with the impression that they rest on the isolated, tyrannical nature of ogress Mme Stephanie.

Despite criticisms of the play's authorship, it attracted a lot of interest, due largely to the part of Theodosia Hemming being played by Mrs Patrick Campbell. Having made her reputation on the merits of Paula Tanqueray, Mrs Campbell never failed to stimulate the interest of fashionable London.

Mrs Lyttelton moved in the liberal intellectual and political circles, was married to a politician, was a great lover of the theatre and close friend of the famous actress. Mrs Patrick Campbell could not resist the novelty of performing in her friend's own play and Margaret Peters in her biography of Stella Campbell, gives the following account of the opening night :

Like most things Stella touched, the first night of Warp and Woof on June 6 took place in a blaze of publicity. She had taken the large, handsome Camden Theatre in unfashionable Camden Town for an opening that was really a social event. Word had got out that Warp and Woof was the effort of the wife of a distinguished politician, and that the fashionable world would be there. By eight o'clock three or four thousand people were milling about the theatre entrance trying to get a look at the arriving "nobs". Finally, mounted police had to be called out to keep back the crush of the curious from the door. "What a first night it was!" laughed Stella, who could act her best on the news that a lord or lady was out front. The fact that tonight society was gathering to hear itself condemned by one of its own members made the occasion all the more piquant. 33

Critical opinion was divided between those who admitted to the laudability of the play's purpose, as did 'advanced' thinking critics, Walkley, Archer or the Star's reviewer, who stated that the call for an English Brieux had been answered,³⁴ and those who dismissed it as an inadequate and inept experiment, wasted on fashionable London, there to be seen not to think; an opinion supported by the Westminster Gazette and Pall Mall Gazette amongst others.³⁵ As to Mrs Pat, several critics thought her talent was wasted in the role, but that, as in the case of Lena Ashwell's Thérèse, her talent made more of the character than was to be gained from a reading of the script, and if the play did not work, it was not the fault of the actress:

She is a touching, gracious, pathetic figure that appeals to our pity, rather than our imagination. She sees the obvious pathos of her lot, but the deeper tragedy of the character which finds its fate in a pitiless environment, and nobly struggles to keep the soul alive - that is hardly touched by the authoress. It is all there,



Mrs Pat as Theodosia

doubtless, in the story, but Mrs Lyttelton lacks the skill to bring it out and set it before our eyes. The actress suggests it - how could Mrs Campbell fail to open for us large vistas? But it is not explicit in the play. 36

In short, the production was a praiseworthy crusade on the part of the dramatist, enhanced by the talents of the actress, but still falling a long way behind the dramatic authorship of Brieux.

Getting across a particular 'purpose' to an audience was suited to the one act drama, which did not allow for any extraneous characterization, sub-plots or deviations into sugarcoated, melodramatic affairs of the heart. In order to achieve the desired impact, its arguments required to be simply and swiftly stated, as illustrated in two further examples of women and the workplace, namely, Harold Brighouse's Lonesome Like and Elizabeth Baker's Miss Tassey. Lonesome Like was performed by Miss Horniman's summer company in August 1911 and then entered the autumn repertoire of the 1911-2 season and Miss Tassey was performed at Manchester in the February of 1913, though it had had a London première in 1910. ^{the plays} Though belong to the Manchester school, discussion of these particular one act dramas is reserved for this section because of their relevance to dramatic documentation of women and work. Not only do the plays offer a contrast to those previously discussed in this chapter, owing to their down-to-earth, simple style of provincial realism, but they also concentrate on a different aspect of women and work; the problems working women face as they begin to age.

Lonesome Like takes the case of Sarah Ormerod who is on the point of being forced to go into the workhouse as she has had to give up her job as a weaver, owing to the paralysis of her hands. Her neighbour, Emma Brierly, stops by to help and is proposed to by the 'idiot' Sam Horrocks, whose mother has recently died, leaving him alone in the world. Emma refuses him as she is already engaged and as a solution, Sarah agrees to take the place of Sam's mother, as a way out of their mutual difficulties and loneliness.

This short piece raises the question of hardship for working class women. No doubt, Emma, as a young weaver, has the same fate in store for her as Sarah, if her husband dies early or she is left unprovided for. Its tone is critical of

society which fails to care for its people once they become a burden on the system. Criticism is directed chiefly at the clergy. The young reverend who visits Sarah offers her a cheap copy of the New Testament as the one solution to her problems. As he is the only character who does not speak in dialect, his alienation and failure to understand the suffering and needs of the working poor is underlined. Ada King played Sarah and triumphed in yet another low-key masterpiece, which despite its pathos, eluded pessimism by advocating working class solidarity as a means of combating poverty and loneliness.³⁷

Miss Tassey was billed as a 'one act tragedy', publicity referring to Elizabeth Baker's previous success as the author of Chains. With an all female cast of five women,³⁸ the play is set in the dormitory at Messers. Trimmer's. Its inhabitants are live-in, single shopgirls, of a range of ages. The youngest, Rose, is still full of the excitement of escaping from the dormitory for a night out with her young man. Her naïvety contrasts with the older and worldly-wise Miss Postlewaite, who is encouraging her to marry as soon as possible to avoid the fate of the single, aging shopgirl, which is a life of constant drudgery and an uncertain future.³⁹ This is confirmed by the ominous, shadowy presence of Miss Tassey, supposedly asleep throughout the chatter amongst the women, though she is in fact dead. Her self-inflicted death has proved a preferable alternative to life in the workhouse, now that she is too old and infirm to be of valuable service to Trimmers. As in Lonesome Like, the play foretells of the unhappiness a working woman can expect in later life when she is too old to work and has nobody to take care of her. Such is the naïvety of youth, that it is hard to shake Rose's belief in the immortality of her looks and charm, but her fate will either be marital poverty or that of Miss Tassey.

In a season when the Gaiety's resident company was seriously depleted, owing to players away in America, the parts were taken by newcomers. Of these, Miss Lilian Cavanah as the lively Rose was singled out for comment by the local Daily Dispatch, though in the main it gave a negative report of this 'snatch of raw life', owing to the 'slightness of the story'.⁴⁰ More positive, was the Manchester Evening News's description of the 'one act tragedy' as a 'gripping' and 'well-drawn story'.⁴¹

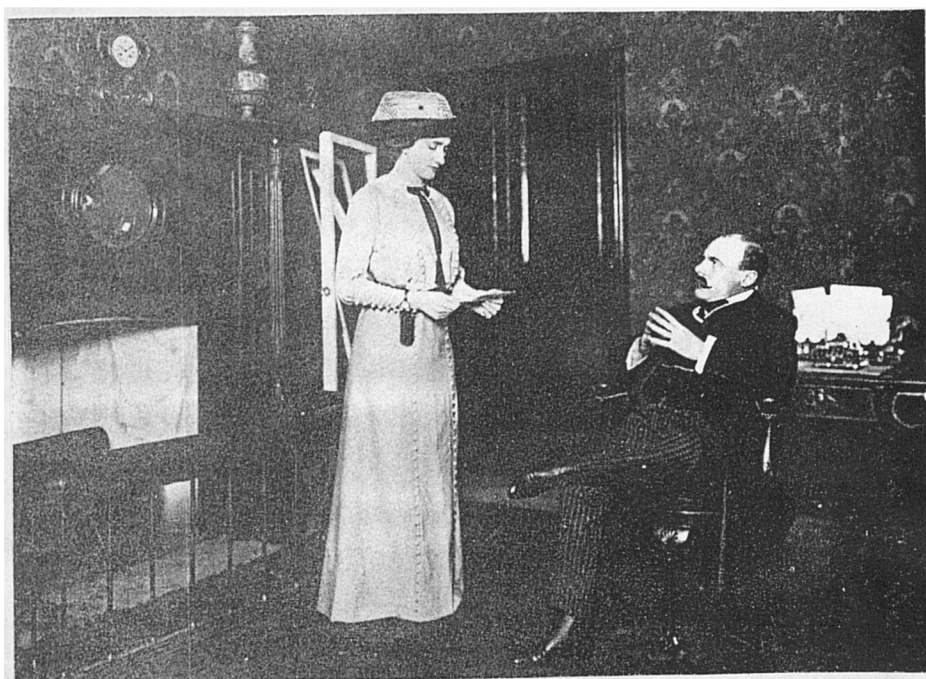
In general the play unfortunately escaped the attention of the critics, as so frequently happened with so called, one act, 'curtain raisers'.

More successful, was J.M. Barrie's one act play, The Twelve Pound-Look, first performed by Charles Frohman's Repertory at the Duke of York's in March 1910. It strikes a more encouraging note than the previous examples, as it shows an independent woman, Kate, unwittingly running into her former husband on the eve of his knighthood. She now supports herself by working for a typing agency, which has sent her to type 'Sir' Harry's answers to letters of congratulation. Taking a look at Harry's unchanged pomposity and second, enslaved wife, she has no regrets. In their confrontation scene, she explains to him how she secretly earned her first twelve pounds to buy her own type writer; her means to escape from their disastrous marriage. Unlike Villier's Elisabeth, there is no going back for Kate, who exits with a warning to her ex-husband, to watch out for the 'twelve-pound look' in his wife's eyes.

The original Kate was played by Lena Ashwell, but within twelve months the role had also been performed by two more actresses associated with the drama of ideas and the suffrage movement, viz., Lillah McCarthy and Irene Vanbrugh.⁴² In the following April, it was also played at Manchester's Gaiety with Irene Rooke taking the part of Kate. It is strange to reflect on how the typewriter then symbolized independence for women, as a typing career was one of the few opportunities open to them, whereas now it signifies the opposite.

Though the heroines who populated these one act plays were everyday, unextraordinary, working women, there was still room on the English stage for the descendants of Marguerite Gautier and Paula Tanqueray, as illustrated by John Galsworthy's The Fugitive, performed at the Royal Court Theatre, 16 September 1913.

Clare Dedmond, Galsworthy's 'fugitive', is characteristic of the révoltée type. As a 'sensitive soul immured in the prison-house of stolid British upper-middle class respectability',⁴³ she leaves her husband to seek an alternative. Concerned for its façade of respectability, the defenders and representatives of middle and upper class morality refuse to have her disgracing the family and block her every escape route. Attempts at self-sufficiency by working as a shopgirl; her libre union with



Lillah McCarthy in The Twelve-Pound Look

Malise, a man she respects and loves, are all thwarted by the conspiracy of respectability. Ultimately, because she is a woman who must give in return for receiving, she is left with only herself to give, either in suicide or prostitution. As her virtue and honesty have, despite circumstances, remained 'untarnished', she takes her life after the grand manner of her predecessors.

Having abandoned the Gaiety for the 19¹₃-14 season, Irene Rooke and partner Milton Rosmer joined the Court and took the principal part of Clare and her artist-lover, in the 1913 production. The Times described her as a 'wife on strike' and though not altogether approving of Galsworthy's inclination for depicting the 'general cussedness of things', felt her role as Clare was 'very sweetly acted'.⁴⁴ The Daily Telegraph drew attention to her 'wistful beauty', 'delicate skill' and 'fineness of spirit',⁴⁵ while the Daily Chronicle described her performance 'as near to Duse as an English actress could get'.⁴⁶ The Era noted that the audience was 'greatly impressed' by the production and that, 'Miss Irene Rooke greatly distinguished herself in the part of Clare Dedmond, and her death scene at the close was a triumph of realism'.⁴⁷ Reading through the stage directions for the on-stage suicide scene,⁴⁸ one is convinced of the actress's opportunity for playing a death scene worthy of Bernhardt and guaranteed to arouse audience sympathy. However, dying in the grand manner was now a rather outmoded dramatic device for winning sympathy for the female plight. Equally outmoded, as the Nation pointed out, was the 'beautiful, helpless' heroine, given the advent of the capable, modern woman.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the position of the well-educated middle to upper class woman, whose education fitted her for nothing except marriage, needed bringing to public attention and the device was one means, to which such an argument, could still be harnessed.

It is now clear that the social drama which set out to portray the difficulties of working women, found the question of prostitution related to the problems of the labour market, as it documented the incidence of sexual harassment, poor working conditions and attempts by men to keep women out of the workplace. In this way the plays also work towards exploding the myth of female promiscuity and immorality. They demonstrate the way in which women from the middle and lower classes are

generally forced by economic circumstances into prostitution. As the number of scenarios in which girls in domestic service are seduced and abandoned when pregnant, or middle class daughters are seduced and turned away by their unrelenting fathers, increase, it becomes impossible to believe in the fictitious glorification of illicit sex. A scientific and naturalist approach to probing the social and economic base to prostitution, exposes the realities middle class ideology fought so long and hard to resist.

An early and key example of naturalist documentation of prostitution was the production of Jean Ajalbert's La fille Elisa at the Théâtre Libre, 26 December 1890, which was based on the novel by Edmond Goncourt. In this three act 'judicial' drama, the crime is committed in the first act by 'la fille' Elisa, as she attempts to evade the amorous advances of her soldier-lover. In the second act, she is tried and found guilty of murder and in the third and final act, is seen in prison. In the opening act, Elisa is in the company of 'outcast' women, but this world has none of the mid-century courtisane glamour. In the trial scene the reality of a prostitute's life is reconstructed by Elisa's defence lawyer and the notion of high living or a glorified existence are rapidly demythologized. He bases his portrait on the social factors which have made her the woman she is. ^{As Elisa was} born of an unknown father, and a mother who had a dubious reputation as a sage femme, her associates from early childhood were all prostitutes. She understood prostitution simply as a way of life; a means of work. Twice she had been subject to typhoid which had left her brain partially impaired. In no way can she be judged as a woman who falls from high to low, but must be understood as a woman who has been disadvantaged from birth; 'il n'y avait pas là une femme qui tombe; mais dans le bas-fond social une existence qui suit son cours normal, une destinée qui va droit, où elle devait aller'.⁵⁰ The lawyer invites the court's (and implicitly the audience's) sympathy for his client, because of the way in which society has moulded her as a prostitute :

- messieurs les jurés, j'ai voulu vous montrer l'enfant digne de pitié, la femme digne d'intérêt, dans cette fille Elisa que l'accusation considérait comme indigne d'intérêt et de pitié par cela seul qu'elle était une prostituée, une prostituée de bas étage. (II.1.p.34)

He loses his case and though reprieved from the death sentence, Elisa is condemned to a worse fate; life-long imprisonment in a penal institution where the women must remain silent; an inhuman and barbaric form of male inflicted punishment, used in the French penal system, likely to drive women to madness.

In the original production the part of Elisa was played by the unknown Mlle Eugénie Nau, who became an overnight success in the role and is summarized by Thalasso, as an 'artiste sincère qui a su dégager le pathétique du pathos et le ramener à la simplicité de la nature'.⁵¹ Wolff described her as particularly touching in the house of correction scenes,⁵² and Sarcey thought her superb throughout, noting that 'il y a dans son genre de beauté un je ne sais quel ragoût de bestialité superbe et triste dont s'accommodait de personnage'.⁵³ In his memoirs, Antoine refers to the original possibility of having an Hungarian actress in the title role, on the recommendation of the Austrian ambassador, but he finally gave the part to Mlle Nau, who had apparently been rehearsing a minor role, and clearly the casting was successful.⁵⁴ Luce Colas (the original Akoulina in Antoine's production of La puissance des ténèbres) brought her talents for playing the soubrette to the minor role of Elisa's associate, Globe-la-lune, and Louise France, noted for her naturalist style of playing, took the part of Elisa's mother. Thalasso describes her style and curious rehearsal technique as follows :

Elle ne jouait pas elle "vivait" ses rôles. Avec quel art! Manquant totalement de mémoire, Louise France transfusait le texte dans sa voix, ses gestes, ses mouvements. Répétait jusqu'à la dernière heure la brochure à la main. Le soir de la Première, elle avait complètement oublié un rôle qu'elle n'avait jamais su, d'ailleurs. Et voilà qu'elle le retrouvait mot pour mot, aidée par la mémoire de ses bras, de ses jambes et de la mise en scène...

Artiste d'une fantaisie géniale, elle a donné à tous ses personnages un relief extraordinaire de réalisme. 55

Overall, with the notable exception of Hector Pessard's review for the Gaulois,⁵⁶ the play was reasonably received by the critics. The conservative Sarcey, despite his admiration for Mlle Nau, could not resist digs at the discrepancies in the realistic details of the staging, nor the suggestion that this piece of 'non-theatre' would not survive the 'real' theatre going, Parisian public.⁵⁷ However, the 'real' public

were not to see the play for some time.

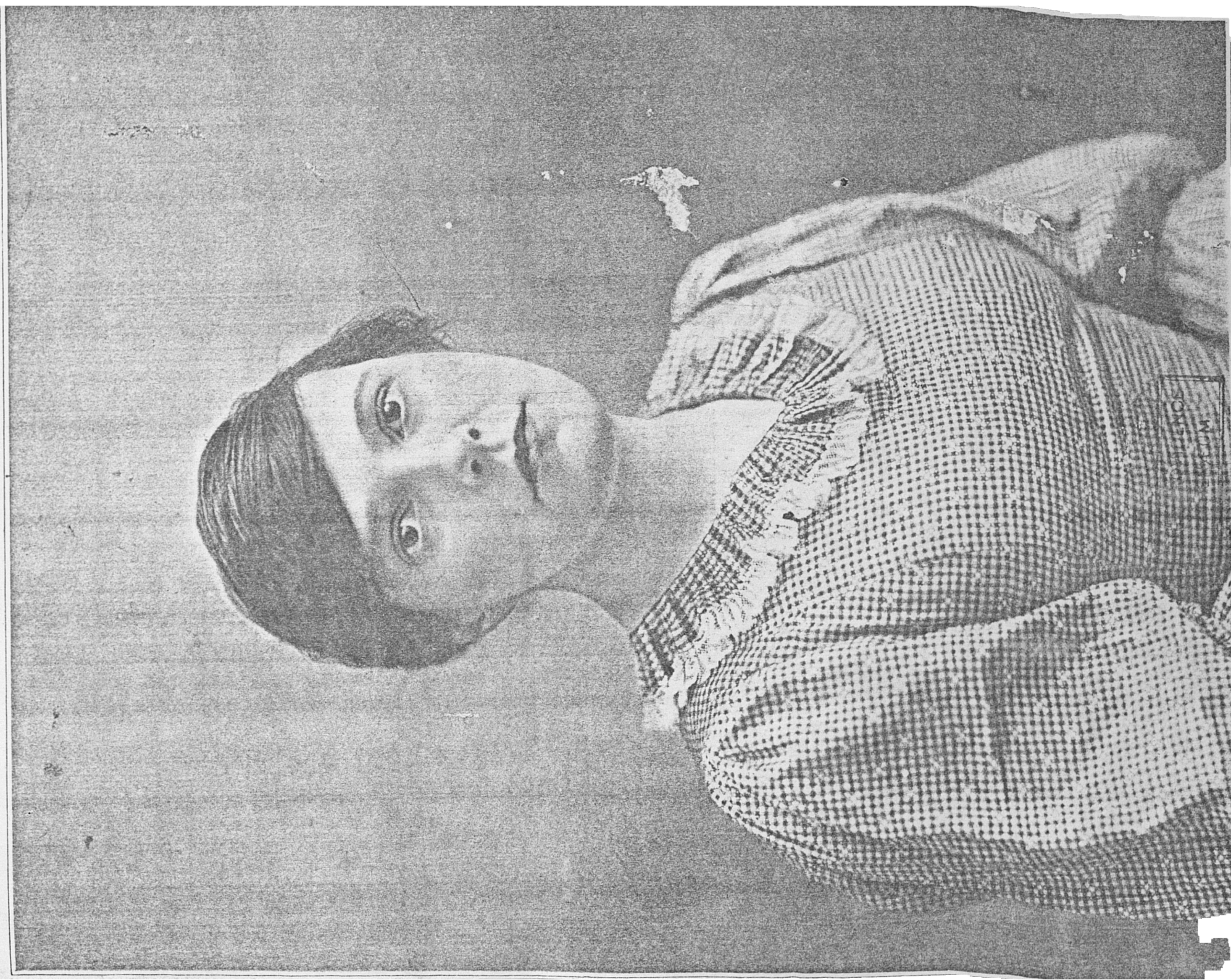
It was to be expected that the demythologization of middle class morality would inevitably meet with resistance. The defenders of public morals were concerned to leave its fictions intact and preferred to denounce the truth rather than engage in a critical and painful self-examination. Consequently, plays which attempted to discuss taboo issues, were often subjected to unfair, rigorous dramatic censorship. The original production of La fille Elisa escaped censorship by virtue of the Théâtre Libre's private status, but it came under attack when it was proposed to include it in a repertoire at Duquesnel's Porte-Saint-Martin, which had been abruptly and embarrassingly vacated by Sarah Bernhardt in the January of 1891. Though ^{the play was} defended by the Deputy of the Seine, Millerand, backed by citations from leading critics of the day, who had not attributed immoral intentions to the play on its production, the minister of Public Instruction, M. Bourgeois, sustained the censorship.⁵⁸ As in the case of Barker's Waste, a public outcry against the power of the censor ensued, with anti-censorship articles and cartoons, featuring Elisa, appearing in leading papers.

According to Thalasso the ban was finally lifted in 1900, and in 1910 the play was successfully revived by the Théâtre Antoine, with Suzanne Desprès as Elisa. Subsequent to her role in Renard's Poil de carotte (1900) and in Les remplaçantes, she was established as an actress of the 'new', naturalist generation of writers and players. Like Réjane, she had none of Bartet's regular beauty, but was noted for her face and physique which brought credibility to the social roles, in which classical beauty would have been woefully miscast. Her role as Elisa both enhanced her reputation as a 'new' actress, and evoked sympathy and understanding for the victim-heroine, at the mercy of 'la machine sociale'.

Two of the most outspoken and uncompromising discussions of prostitution, namely, Brieux's Les avariés and Shaw's Mrs Warren's Profession, were both subject to the same fate as Ajalbert's play, and were delayed several years in coming to the stage.

Les avariés, which was censored in its rehearsal stage at the Théâtre Antoine, in the November of 1901, and was not performed in Paris until 22 February 1905,

LE THÉÂTRE



Suzanne Desprès in La fille Elisa : front cover to Le Théâtre, July (II), 1910.

at Antoine's venue, was the most shocking of Brioux's 'purpose' plays. Antoine's diary entries for October and November 1901,⁵⁹ reveal the enormous prejudice and surprise at Brioux's intended enterprise, somewhat assuaged by Brioux's own reading of his play; a private performance, which as in the history of La fille Elisa, gained support from the cultural élite and the press in anti-censorship protests, but was not enough to overrule the ban.

With echoes of Ibsen's Ghosts,⁶⁰ Brioux in Les avariés sets out to demonstrate the hazards of prostitution, in its spreading of the 'unmentionable' disease, syphilis. A young man, about to marry, has contracted the disease and despite medical advice, goes ahead with his marriage and infects his wife and child. Typically, his wife is the last to learn of her husband's infirmity. In the second act of the play, every attempt is made to prevent her from discovering the truth and she is absent from the stage throughout most of the act, in spite of the central concern being the welfare of her child; a dramatic device, which serves to reflect society's determination to keep women in ignorance and allow them to suffer the consequences. In general, Brioux employs the dramatic device of presenting abstract, suffering types,⁶¹ using impersonal titles ('l'avarié', 'le docteur', 'l'épouse' etc.), for characters, creating distance and objectivity.

The seriousness of Brioux's intentions in writing the play, his purpose of educating the public into the very real risks of promiscuity, was generally misconceived as creating an opportunity for sensational, scandal mongering. After Brioux's reading of the play, one critic attempted a partial defence, by stating he was sure that the dramatist was not aiming to create a scandal, but that nevertheless, 'the subject was a most delicate one. Les avariés treats of a medical problem and medical problems are out of place on the stage'.⁶² Yet Brioux felt that the theatre was one place in which matters which the authorities preferred not to mention could at least be heard.

After the performance in 1905, critical opinion was divided between those who thought the subject completely misplaced on the stage, and those, who supported and agreed with Brioux's view, that people could profit from information released in drama. On the side of those outraged by Brioux's play was Duquesnel, adamant

that the stage was not the place for 'un thème médicale', which he could not report to his readers, not even with recourse to Latin, 'une langue qui, pourtant, a le don particulier de purifier ce qu'elle exprime'.⁶³ On the other hand, L'Humanité pointed out that there was nothing scandalous in the drama, and that the audience could listen to it, 'sinon avec plaisir du moins avec profit'.⁶⁴ Certainly, the attention given to the play had heightened curiosity and given it the allure of a forbidden fruit, which in turn reflected the general attitude to syphilis; a taboo topic, that nevertheless incited curiosity.⁶⁵ Brisson states that Brieux's play, now a current topic of conversation, had also provided a new term, l'avarié, which was being used as a polite euphemism for discussing syphilis.⁶⁶

Again, while opinion remained divided on the play, credit went to the players for the quality of the performance. In particular, Jeanne Lion (the unfortunate Annette of Maternité) was cited for her brief tableau of the 'fille', played 'avec beaucoup de vérité et de pittoresque'.⁶⁷ Mlle Grumbach (the abortionist in Maternité) played the emotional mother-figure, and Mlle Van Doren undertook the wife-figure, both of whom were complimented by Brisson, though both were overshadowed in his opinion, by Mlle Miller, 'une Nourrice sublime de conviction, de naturel : la vraie vache laitière morvandante'.⁶⁸

Among the English critics, Shaw, as an earnest supporter of Brieux, leapt to his defence and in a preface to the first volume of Brieux's plays translated into English, which includes a translation of Les avariés under the title of Damaged Goods,⁶⁹ explained why he deemed it necessary to mention the 'unmentionable' on stage :

when we come to sex, the taboo steps in, with the result that all the allurements of sex may be exhibited on the stage heightened by every artifice that the imagination of the voluptuary can devise, but not one of its dangers and penalties. You may exhibit seduction on the stage; but you must not even mention illegitimate conception and criminal abortion. We may, and do, parade prostitution to the point of intoxicating every young person in the theatre; yet no young person may hear a word as to the diseases that follow prostitution and avenge the prostitute to the third and fourth generation of them that buy her. 70

Both Brieux and Shaw shared in the belief in theatre, as one of the best means

of propaganda. Their enthusiasm for reformist policies and faith in the theatre as the platform from which to express them, was, however, a minority view and needed the support of equally courageous theatre practitioners, such as Antoine, who were prepared to experiment with the new, radical and controversial ideas and artistic forms. It was owing to Antoine's persistence in braving conservative opinion that Brioux's play reached the Parisian public in 1905, and succeeded in troubling and generating discomfort amongst audiences and critics, as Brioux wished.⁷¹

At a much later date, the usefulness of Les avariés as a propaganda piece for warning men of the dangers of sexual indulgence, was conceded, and it was used for educating the troops on the dangers of sexual promiscuity in the first world war, and was used in America by the 'Connecticut Society of Social Hygiene' in 1911.⁷²

Shaw's own play, Mrs Warren's Profession, also met with strong opposition. Though written in 1894, it was refused a licence for performance and was not produced until 5 January 1902, when the Stage Society gave a private production at the New Lyric Club. Like Brioux, Shaw was interested in redressing the balance; in demythologizing the glorification of illicit sex, as manifested in the stage drama in its numerous courtisanes and adulterous tringales; in creating, as Martin Meisel describes it, a 'counter portrait' or 'genre anti-type' to the 'courtesan play'.⁷³ Like Ajalbert, Shaw wanted to show the social machinery at work on its victims and unlike Mrs Lyttelton, was able to probe the root of the social evil.⁷⁴ His 'purpose' is clearly stated in the opening of his preface :

Mrs Warren's Profession was written in 1894 to draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing, and overworking women so shamefully that the poorest of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together. ⁷⁵

Furthermore, he aimed to dispel the notion of the coy and impractical assumption that such a play was not fit for women to see, stating openly that it was designed primarily for women.⁷⁶

Ironically for a play that the public began by rejecting, it is now so well known (unlike so many of the plays in this study), that it requires very little introduction. By setting up an exploratory mother-daughter relationship, Shaw is able to pursue the wider issues of women, work and prostitution. Mrs Warren's arguments make it clear that prostitution was the alternative to starvation wages and the making money out of the only skill she had of 'pleasing' men, was not a question of pleasure or immoral inclinations, but the business of survival. In a capitalist society where business ventures as money ventures means no one minds having dirty hands, trading in sex, is no more immoral than the MP who runs his factory with 600 girls on starvation wages.⁷⁷ The fault lies not in the immoral nature of an isolated individual, but in the culpability of society as a whole.⁷⁸

Critical reaction on the play's production was, as one might expect, unfavourable. J.T. Grein opens his review with, 'it was an exceedingly uncomfortable afternoon', and goes on to complain of the number of women in the audience, completely missing Shaw's object in aiming his play primarily at the female sex :

there was a ³majority of women to listen to that which could only be understood by a minority of men. Nor was the play fit for women's ears. By all means let us initiate our daughters before they cross the threshold of womanhood into those duties and functions of life which are vital in matrimony and maternity. But there is a boundary line, and its transgression means peril - the peril of destroying ideals. I go further. Even men need not know all the ugliness that lies below the surface of everyday life. To some male minds too much knowledge of the seamy side is poisonous, for it leads to pessimism, that pioneer of insanity and suicide. And, sure as I feel that most of the women, and a good many of the men, who were present at the production of Mrs Warren's Profession by the Stage Society, did not at first know, and finally merely guessed, what was the woman's trade, I cannot withhold the opinion that the representation was unnecessary and painful. ⁷⁹

For a former 'advanced' thinker and pioneer of experimental theatre, Grein's view reflects a ⁴startling change in attitude, now marked by the bigoted and blinkered tones of a conservative.⁸⁰ One expects The Times to make such a statement, but not one of Shaw's own kind. The Times, in point of fact, dismissed the play as a piece of propaganda composed in a series of explanations.⁸¹ The Era's main objection was to 'Mrs Warren Shaw' as the author's mouthpiece.⁸² Beerbohm more favourably acknowledged that he found Shaw's play, 'much less unpleasant than that milk-



Above, Fanny Brough as Mrs Warren. Below, Madge McIntosh as Vivie.



and-water romance (brewed of skimmed milk and stale water) which is the fare commonly provided for me in the theatre'.⁸³

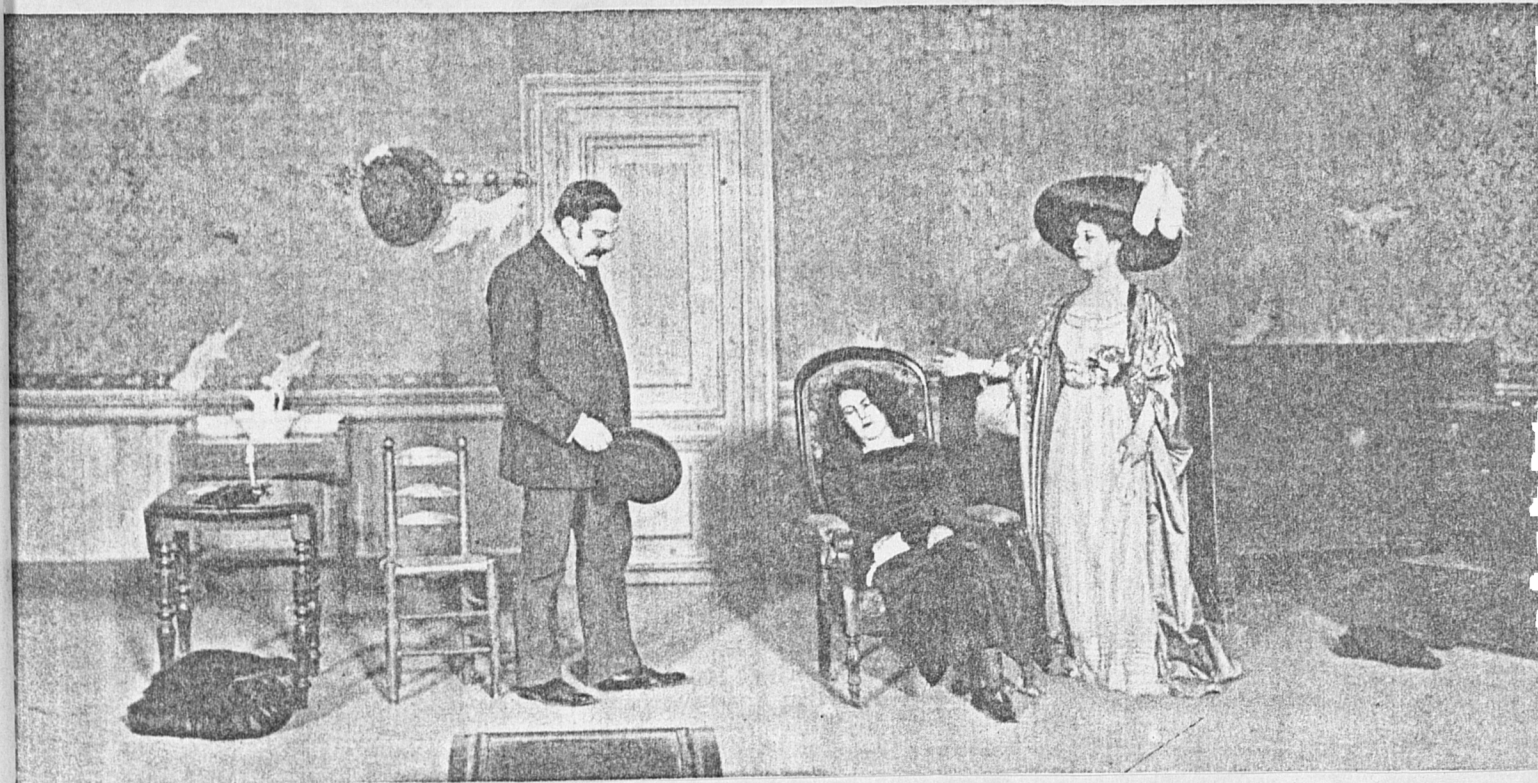
Though grave doubts were voiced about the play itself, there was warm praise for the acting, confirming once more the beneficial effect of the stock as opposed to star policy in the 'new' theatres. Miss Fanny Brough, in her performance was singled out for particular comment :

Miss Fanny Brough, a woman of more brain and heart than half a dozen of our more or less leading ladies en bloc, achieved that which had long been predicted by her admirers. She proved that she is not only a splendid comédienne, but that she is endowed with the profounder gifts which characterise tragic actresses. Whatever vitality the character of Mrs Warren now and again seemed to achieve, whatever feeling of sympathy was aroused in the spectator, sprung from Miss Brough's magnificent impersonation. She had to play upon the entire clavier of emotions, and in that exceedingly difficult concerto there was not a wavering note, let alone an inharmonious chord.⁸⁴

The Times congratulated her humanity and humour which helped her in accomplishing 'a very delicate task'. On the whole, it was felt that Miss Madge McIntosh as Vivie had a difficult job in bringing life and vitality to such a cold character, but that she was nevertheless successful in doing so.

The attempts of Brioux and Shaw to re-educate the French and English audiences into the realities of prostitution and its consequences, had a few imitators, though less vociferous and less adroit in their compositions.

M. Henri Desfontaines's Prostituée, based on the novel by M. Victor Margueritte, and playing at the Ambigu in May 1910, was described by Le Théâtre's critic, as belonging to the 'école de M. Brioux'.⁸⁵ Though the play's didactic, moral purpose is clear - its revolt against the hypocrisy of bourgeois morality underlined by the inclusion of a Dumas-type raisonneur, Dr Montal - it becomes entangled in the melodrama of the misfortunes of its two victim-heroines, Rose and Annette. Both are seduced at the outset by an unscrupulous rogue who infects them with syphilis. Rose's misfortunes go from bad to worse. Diseased and pregnant, she embarks on a life of prostitution which finally culminates in her accidental death by her criminal, protecteur, Casse-Tête. Annette, however, is cured and by becoming a grande courtisane uses her power to destroy their seducer. So much 'story-telling' detracts



Prostituée : above, Annette (Mlle Mylo d'Arcylle) at the side of her dying sister, Rose (Mlle Mancini). Below, the unfortunate Rose.



from the play's purpose, as it swings uneasily between incisive social comment, in scenes such as the prostitute's 'dortoir du dépôt' or the 'commission de mœurs', and a tale of villains and victims. The juxtaposition of its victims Rose, played by Mlle C. Mancini and Annette interpreted by Mlle Mylo d'Arcy, is a stark one; highlighting the hazards of a 'profession' which has its business-like Mrs Warrens and those who prove unequal to survival, just like any other capitalist commerce.

Prostitution was also the subject of Charles Rann Kennedy's one act play, The Necessary Evil (1913),⁸⁶ which advocated chastity for men as a solution to promiscuity in society. There are echoes of Augier's L'aventurière, as the drama, which focuses on a family group, is dominated by a portrait of the deceased mother, who died of a broken heart, while trying to help with the tragic lives of fallen women. Now it is the turn of the young, innocent daughter, to carry on her work, and the mainstay of the piece, is a dialogue between the virgin-daughter and a 'harlot' who explains the hypocrisy and promiscuity of the male sex to her. Theory is put into practice, as the play concludes with the wayward son of the family repeating of his lifestyle and demonstrating self-disgust, while the father looks up at the portrait of the mother-figure, for hope and salvation.

Though rather weak as a piece of theatre, tending towards melodrama in its oversimplified apportioning of blame and definitions of 'good' and 'evil', nevertheless, the notion of chastity for men, which was what the suffragettes were preaching, and recognition of the male's guilt, is an advancement on the earlier myths of female culpability.

The aim in examining drama which deals with how women were faring outside the doll's house, is to indicate the limitations and prejudices involved in a woman's attempt to have a lifestyle of her own. Though, as the first chapters of this section indicated, women were represented in the social drama and 'experimental' theatres, as objecting to the constrictions of the wife and mother roles, this last shows how slim their chances of survival were, outside the domestic boundaries. The plays indicate that women could expect to face sexual harassment and poor, economic, working conditions if they tried to support themselves. Society, the

drama shows, was reluctant to recognize the needs of women from all social classes who had to work to survive; failed to understand their poverty and the hopelessly inadequate education system which made them unfit for any occupation other than 'pleasing' men.

Turn of the century theatre in England and France was one public space in which it was demonstrated that such attitudes and values could be called into question. The power of an artistic, cultural institution, which gathered people together and confronted them with their own hypocrisies and prejudices, cannot be underestimated, when re-examining the part the theatre of the 'new' was able to play in the changing face of women.

Notes to Chapter 12 : Outside the Doll's House : A Woman's 'Profession'

1. Blanchette (Paris : Stock, 1897), III.4.p.116. The last act of the play was in fact rewritten by Brieux. In the original version, used in the production, the third act portrayed the father in financial difficulty and his daughter helping him out by means of a wealthy lover. Audiences and several critics, notably Sarcey, found this indigestible, and when the play was performed in the provinces, Antoine cut out the third act. Eventually, therefore, Brieux re-wrote the ending and concluded on a happier note by means of a family reconciliation and the marriage of Elise to a young man of her own kind.
The quotation comes from the second version of the third act.
2. Le Théâtre Libre (1909), p.145.
3. Le Figaro, 3 February 1892, p.6.
4. See Le Gaulois, 3 February 1892, p.3.
5. Theodore Zeldin, France 1848-1945, vol 1 (1973), comments on the high percentage of French women at work compared to other European countries, quoting 38.9 per cent of the female population as in employment in 1906. He gives a statistical breakdown of percentage and job types for 1911, '56.6 percent of women working in non-agricultural jobs were in industry, 18.6 per cent in commerce, 7.5 per cent in the liberal professions and 17.3 percent in domestic work' (p.351), and goes on to make the point, that despite statistical evidence, society had not yet recognized the increasing percentage of middle class women without incomes or families who needed to work. From this he infers that it partly accounted for 'why feminism was largely a middle-class affair, for the bourgeoisie only now [i.e. 1914 war] became properly aware of the problems of the working woman, to which the poorer classes had long ago adjusted'.
6. La femme seule (Paris : Stock, 1913), II.1, pp99-100.
7. Julie Holledge, Innocent Flowers (1981), p.95, implies that Thérèse took on journalism and her factory post concurrently, which is a misleading implication, as her attempts at employment in the factory are a consequence of her failure in journalism.
8. The unionized, male workforce was anxious to keep women out of the labour market; an anxiety voiced particularly by those in skilled trades. Roger Magraw,

France 1815-1914 : The Bourgeois Century (Oxford : Fontana, 1983), writes as follows :

The iconography of French trade-union propaganda juxtaposed the brawny male breadwinner with his staunch wife and children at home. Female wage-labour was one of capitalism's most impious and sordid crimes. In consequence male militants spent more energy excluding women from the labour market than aiding their embryonic unionization - oblivious to the feminist arguments which stressed that lack of female job opportunity led either to prostitution or that persistence of female religiosity of which socialists complained'. (pp.288-9)

9. Preface to Three Plays by Brieux (London :Herbét Jenkins, 1916) p.v.
Protection for a married woman's income took longer to enforce in France than in England. Zeldin (1973), p.356, cites ameliorations in 1881 and 1895, allowing women to open post office accounts in their own names and draw out money without a husband's consent,&the 1907 law, allowing a working woman ownership and right to her wages, though points out, that such amendments, were hard to enforce, because a husband was still legally responsible for his wife's debts.
10. For example, see Duquesnel's review in Le Gaulois, 23 December 1912, p.2. Though Duquesnel reflects the majority view, there were a few who appreciated Brieux's social conscience, like the communist paper, L'Humanité, whose reviewer stated that he would swop 10 acts of any boulevard play for just one scene from any of Brieux's dramas (23 December 1912, p.3).
11. 4 January 1913, p.15.
12. Le Théâtre, no.338 January, 1913, p.16.
13. Le Temps, 30 December 1912, p.2.
14. Le Théâtre,no.338 January, 1913, p.16.
15. Le Figaro, 23 December 1912, p.5.
16. For details, see Julie Holledge, Innocent Flowers, part 2, which is a substantial study of the AFL, to which I am indebted for my summatory comments on the League.
17. The other play produced was A Gauntlet, by Norwegian playwright, Bjornstjerne Bjornson. A plot summary and details are given by Holledge (1981), pp.94-5.
18. Growth in translation was due to an increased demand for foreign plays in the new, 'experimental' theatre, and more generally, because the 1887 Treaty of Berne had finally established the 'literary property of foreigners', putting an end to pirate translations and adaptations.
19. Suffragette, 3 January 1913 , p.173.
20. Suffragette, 10 January 1913, p.187.
21. Suffragette, 12 December 1913, p.209.
22. The translation by Charlotte Shaw is fairly literal or faithful to the original text, though in the case of the last act the material is rearranged sequentially. This, however, may be connected with Brieux's own alterations to the last act, which he alludes to in the preface to the published translation (London : Jenkins, 1916) :

I must inform my readers that the version of La femme seule, a translation of which is published in this volume, has, so far, not appeared in France and is unknown there; at least as regards the larger part of the third act. I might, did I think it advisable, reproduce in its entirety a text which certain timidities

have led me to emasculate. (p.v)

23. Era, 10 December 1913, p.14.
24. 9 December 1913, p.7.
25. Era, 10 December 1913, p.14.
26. 9 December 1913, p.2.
27. Era, 10 December 1913, p.14.
28. Westminster Gazette, 9 December 1913, p.3.
29. The Times, 9 December 1913, p.10.
30. 9 December 1913.
31. 'The Matter with Women's Work', Daily News, 30 November 1916, reprinted in The Young Rebecca edited by Jane Marcus (London : Macmillan / Virago, 1982), pp.330-332 (p.330).
32. Drama and Life (1907), p.316.
33. Mrs Pat (1984), pp.247-8.
34. 7 June 1904, p.1.
35. 7 June 1904 p.4 and 7 June 1904, p.3, respectively. Despite these criticisms of her ineptitude, Mrs Lyttelton nevertheless continued with her crusades. A later play, The Thumbscrew was performed at the King's Hall in December 1912, by Edy Craig's all female theatre group, the Pioneer Players, and illustrated the exploitation of women outworkers. For a summary of the play and reviews, see Julie Holledge (1981), pp.126-7.
36. Daily Telegraph, 7 June 1904, p.9.
37. In May the same year, the Pioneer Players put on the one act play, In the Workhouse, by Margaret Wynne Nevinson, at the Kingsway Theatre. The play shows the fate of women less fortunate than Sarah who end up in the workhouse and points to the inequalities and absurdities of the Poor Laws, notably the way in which a mother is better off being single rather than married, because she is free of the tyranny of an irresponsible husband or absentee provider, and automatically entitled to assistance. Margaret Wynne Nevinson was herself a Poor Law Guardian, who regularly contributed articles about her experience of cases to national papers, in order to encourage reform. A collection of these are published together as, Workhouse Characters (London : Allen and Unwin, 1915)
38. The play was performed with Macdonald Hasting's full length drama, The New Sin, which, by contrast, required an all male cast.
39. Margaret Bondfield (1873-1954), member of the National Union for Shop Assistants, bears testimony to the desire of young girls to use marriage as an escape route from the drudgery of shop life. In 'A Shop Girl's Life' (1894-1902), from which extracts are reprinted in Strong-Minded Women, compiled by Janet Horowitz Murray (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1984), pp.357-359, she writes,

The very surroundings of shop life accentuated the desire of most shop girls to get married. Long hours of work and the living-in system deprived them of the normal companionship of men in their leisure hours, and the wonder is that so many of the women continued to be good and kind, and self respecting, without the incentive of a great cause, or of any interest outside their job. (p.359)

Murray's introduction to the section on shop assistants (pp.356-7) quotes the number of women in retail trades as escalating from 87,000 in 1861 to 243,000 in 1901. Their hours were seventy five or more per week, with short meal breaks and an average salary of 10s a week, out of which was taken payment for compulsory dormitory type lodgings, which were generally insanitary and overcrowded. Murray also points out that despite low wages, 'genteel' dress was also required of its shopgirls, unlike the factory workers.

40. 25 February 1913, p.7.
41. 26 February 1913, p.6.
42. In her memoirs, Myself a Player (London : Michael Joseph, 1936), Lena Ashwell complains of having the part taken from her (p.11). By some strange wrangling, it was apparently transferred to a member of Frohman's permanent company, i.e. Irene Vanbrugh (p.129).
43. Star, 17 September 1913, p.4.
44. 17 September 1913, p.9.
45. 17 September 1913, p.12.
46. 17 September 1913, p.5.
47. 17 September 1913, p.30.
48. The main directions given in the playtext, published in, Plays : Third Series (London : Duckworth, 1914), are as follows :

Clare has not moved, nor changed the direction of her gaze. Suddenly she thrusts her hand into the pocket of the cloak that hangs behind her, and brings out the little blue bottle which, six months ago, she took from Malise. She pulls out the cork and pours the whole contents into her champagne. She lifts the glass, holds it before her - smiling, as if to call a toast, then puts it to her lips and drinks. Still smiling, she sets the empty glass down, and lays the gardenia flowers against her lips; the gardenias drop into her lap; her arms relax, her head falls forward on her breast. And the voices behind the screen talk on, and the sounds of joy from the supper party wax and wane. (Act IV, p.93)
49. 20 September 1913, p.911.
50. La fille Elisa, (Paris : Charpentier and Fasquelle, 1891), II.1.p.26.
51. Le Théâtre Libre (1909), p.147.
52. Le Figaro, 27 December 1890, p.2.
53. Le Temps, 29 December 1890, p.2.
54. See, "Mes souvenirs" sur Le Théâtre Libre, (Paris : Arthème Fayard, 1921), entry for 23 December 1890.
55. Thalasso, p.144.
56. 27 December 1890, p.3. An indignant Pessard walked out of the theatre after the first act.
57. Le Temps, 29 December 1890, p.1.
58. See Antoine's diary entries for January 1891, "Mes Souvenirs" sur Le Théâtre Libre.

59. In, Mes souvenirs sur Le Théâtre Antoine et sur l'Odéon (1928), pp.183-7.
60. Performed by Antoine's company in May 1890.
61. This is a dramatic technique frequently employed by Brieux to underline a point of instruction, as for example, in his presentation of the abortionist's clients in the final act of Maternité or the background figure of the suffering peasant, in Les remplaçantes (I.11.).
62. René Doumic, 'French Drama in 1901', Fortnightly Review, 77 (January-June, 1902), 170-180 (p.176).
63. Le Gaulois, 23 February 1905, p.3.
64. 25 February 1905, p.3.
65. Attitudes to syphilis were coloured by the conflicting interests of concern, curiosity, fear and veto. Reflecting the taboo attitude was the medical profession. Zeldin (1973), part 2, chapter 11, explains for instance, that up until 1871, the only main hospital devoted to the disease was Laricine, which had underground cells for infected patients, which put off many who might have sought treatment. The first chair of venereal diseases was not created until 1880, when Alfred Fournier filled the post and established a clinic.
 Yet, on the other hand, considerable publicity was given to bogus cures (a point which Brieux develops in Les avariés), and a lot of literature on the subject was published in the second half of the nineteenth century.
66. Le Temps, 27 February 1905, p.1.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. The play was translated by John Pollock. The inclusion of Damaged Goods in the volume, created enormous difficulty in getting the collection published, as Charlotte Shaw describes in the forward to the volume, finally published by the radical publisher, A.C. Fifield in 1911 (London and New York). The volume finally reached publication mainly because of Brieux's entry into the French Academy, which assured him of a recognized, respectable, artistic status.
70. Ibid., third edition, 1914, p.L.
71. The discomfort of audiences is recorded by Antoine in Mes souvenirs sur le Théâtre Antoine et sur l'Odéon, under the entry for 3 May 1905 :

Les représentations des Avariés se poursuivent devant des salles graves qui comprennent parfaitement l'immense portée du spectacle, mais mon contrôleur-chef me signale que presque tous les soirs un ou deux spectateurs se trouvent malheureux qui se sentent atteints et dont l'émotion redouble en entendant débattre ce terrible problème. (p.253)
72. See Charlotte Shaw's forward to Three Plays, third edition, p.iii. For details of propaganda film versions of the play in the early twentieth century, see Annette Kuhn, The Power of the Image, 'A Moral Subject: the VD propaganda feature', pp.96-132.
73. Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theatre (Princeton N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1963), chapter 6 'Courtesans and Magdalens', pp.141-159.
74. In his preface to the play, Plays Unpleasant (1946), Shaw recognizes the trap that Mrs Lyttelton fell into, by painting her characters black and white; a trap which he states as having every intention of avoiding; 'nothing would please our sanctimonious British public more than to throw the whole guilt of Mrs Warren's profession on Mrs Warren herself. Now the whole aim of my play

is to throw the guilt on the British public itself' (p.201).

75. Ibid., p.181.
76. Ibid., p.200.
77. An allusion to Mrs Warren's speech in act III, p.265.
78. J.B. Priestly's 1946 play, An Inspector Calls, which he sets in the year of 1912, is a pertinent echo of Shaw's comments. The suicide of a factory girl (whether imaginary or real), who has been turned out of jobs, has turned to prostitution, and ends her life pregnant and penniless, is shown to be engineered by middle class values, attitudes and hypocrisies. Priestly, like Shaw, insists on a policy of demonstrating, however painfully, that we are all to blame.
79. Dramatic Criticism : 1902-3, p.7.
80. Grein's jaundiced view, became more noticeable in his later career, particularly after the 1918 libel suit, brought by Pemberton-Billing, which forced him to resign as drama critic for the Sunday Times, and left him a crushed and broken man.
81. 7 January 1902, p.9.
82. 11 January 1902, p.15.
83. Around Theatres, p.192.
84. Grein, Dramatic Criticism : 1902-3, p.10.
85. No.274 (May 1910), p.16. This was not the play's first public performance, as the reviewer explains that, 'Prostituée vient d'accomplir le tour du monde, ou tout au moins le tour de France. Voici sa dernière étape' [i.e. the Ambigu].
86. I have been unable to trace any performance details of this play. With respect to the little known author, Camillo Pellizzi, English Drama :The Last Great Phase (London : Macmillan, 1935), pp.102-3, includes a brief discussion of the playwright in the context of dramatists who were reputed for their attacks on the middle classes. A collection of his work, Repertory of Plays for a Company of Seven Players, was published in 1930, and are dramas, described by Pellizi, as abounding in 'moral ideas and social protests' (p.102).

Conclusion : Retrospect and Prospect

The aim of this brief summation is to pull together the three strands of images, as a reminder and assessment of their salient points.

The first selection of images illustrated the variety of femme fatale figures; hybrid forms of the female 'outsider' that provided a lively source of theatrical interest and debate. Included in these were the courtisanes of the French stage; exotic creatures that magnetically repelled and attracted. As magnificent outcasts who developed an awareness of their alienation they invited sympathy. Unrepentant and regal in their 'illicit' splendour, they attracted only 'hisses and boos'. Likewise, the repentant Magdalens, who, when contrite and guilt-ridden, had their audiences weeping copiously into their handkerchiefs. Rebellious and unrepentant, and the critical press began to squirm. The borderline between 'saint' and 'sinner' was a fine one. Actresses who attempted the Cleopatra role discovered it, as audiences resisted the exotic royal, too dangerous to contemplate, in her sexual and political power. Yet those actresses who turned Medea, the avenging outcast queen, into an image of maternal anguish, invited sympathy and understanding. Only in the melodrama, was the 'outcast' as bad and as ugly as she could be, the audience knowing that in the midst of terror and excitement, justice would prevail.

Though these 'outcast' images were presented in different ways and different theatrical forms, they were all viewed with a prurient fascination. The creators of the role and the actresses who played them, relied on this fascination, to draw audiences into the theatres and to seduce them into watching an unpleasant subject made palatable - perhaps even irresistible. Social prejudices were brought into question by plays that hinted at the inequalities in society, though the majority hinted rather than explicated.

The role of the actress in this process, cannot be underestimated. Successful pleading and a sympathetic hearing, depended upon her ability to govern and sway the emotions of her audiences. It was the era of the star and international actress, and the larger than life images of stars such as Bernhardt, Mrs Pat or Ristori,

were matched by the degree of emotionalism they inspired in their Marguerites, Paula Tanquerays or Medeas.

In terms of women gaining power, the image was the least successful of the three, because it relied on bartering beauty for wealth. The seducers who enjoyed sexual power over men, destroyed themselves, in the exchange of beauty for economic gain. The most positive note came from those seduced women, who were not bowed down by guilt and contrition, but, like Vida Levering, demythologized the image of a 'woman with a past', in order that women could better their lives, rather than exit to off-stage suicides.

Just as the first section of images required the actresses to be at their most winning and feminine, the second group demanded they be 'unwomanly males'. In popular theatre, the male impersonators of music hall engaged in a satirical and potentially subversive act, in which women dressed as men, not to foreground their own femininity as their predecessors had done, but to approach an image of masculinity. In male guise, a woman assumed the values of the dominant sex, and undermined them with satirical lyrics and a parody of male mannerisms,

Playing a turn in a hall freed the performer from the constraints of a narrative function and dramatic structure, unlike the Victorian and Edwardian principal boys, whose function was to signify the fairy-tale prince and mythology of Romance, whether they were the sexless Peter Pans or the buxom, imposing 'boys'. At least the pantomime framework justified gender-swopping and legitimised the corseted costumes and tights. Actresses on the 'serious' stage who wore similar costumes, because the plot required it, found their attire frowned upon and constantly in need of justification. Not even the authority of Shakespeare provided dispensation for a Rosalind displaying an unusual amount of 'nether limb', and actresses struggled to realize both a womanly image to appease the spectator, and a boyish-look, to suit the part.

French actresses were more fortunate as the convention of travesti sanctioned male impersonations on the stage. French audiences watched Bernhardt's I'Aiglon and Lorenzaccio, and saw the eaglet and a Florentine prince. English audiences watching Bernhardt's Hamlet, did not see the Danish prince, only an aging, French

actress costumed as Hamlet, in a travesty of Shakespeare's tragedy.

Whereas the images of the first section entailed a prurient magnetism for the 'outcast', these manifestations of the 'third sex' illustrate the fascination of the androgyne, particularly for the female spectator. The idea of two sexes in one and the evasion of gender definition, is one which captivated (and captivates) the popular imagination. In western society, confusion of the sexes and gender-swapping is a disturbing and uncomfortable phenomenon, but licenced by the medium of theatre, disguise of the 'true sex' was viewed, at a safe distance, with the magnetism and fascination which the androgyne generates.

For the actress, male impersonation was a means of expanding her repertoire and testing her skill and talent. Vesta Tilley escaped the restrictions of a career based on singing sweet, little girl songs. Bernhardt, in her later life, expanded her diminishing repertoire, by playing travesti roles, which did not depend on youth and looks she no longer possessed.

As a challenge to the stereotypical image of women as beautiful, tame, domestic creatures, male impersonation was a powerful weapon. The frequent labelling of actresses who reversed the roles of the sexes, as 'unnatural', 'freakish' or 'mannish', signified their subversion of the womanly myth; provided an indication of their power to disturb and challenge the dominant ideology.

The third section of images takes that challenge further. Social drama at the turn of the century showed women in revolt from their age-old roles of wife and mother. The 'revolting women' wanted more from life than makeshift marriages and brutish husbands. The révoltée demanded equality in law that would enable her to take up a new life. Threatened by her spirit of revolt, social pressures sought to keep her bound to a marriage she did not want, disgraced in a second marriage, driven to suicide, or living only through her children. The dangers of young and refuge motherhood, were also debated on the English and French stages. As the hard-hitting, social realists flooded the theatres of the 'new', audiences were coerced into more uncomfortable theatre, that no longer sugared the bitter pill by poetic justice and scène à faire dénouements, as the naturalist, 'slice of life' drama broached hitherto taboo issues, such as abortion, venereal disease or

infanticide. Such theatre, required a different type of actress, and the classical beauty of Bartet, so suited to the emotional drive of the révoltée, was displaced by actresses like Suzanne Desprès, whose image brought credibility to the social realist roles.

The 'new' mood spread, as 'experimental' enterprises spawned companies such as the Manchester Gaiety; companies whose primary interest in theatre did not preclude policies for social change. That this change was (and still is) slow in coming, is shown in the final study of the dramatic representation of women trying to lead independent lives, despite poor job prospects, training, education and the prevalence of sexual harassment, which drove so many into prostitution.

Despite the countering measures to this spirit of revolt, it is this third group of images which offers the most radical challenge to the ideology of female passivity, in the call for emancipation and realization of female desires. The demand for radical reassessment of sexual politics is mirrored in the sexual politics of theatre, which begin to change with the advent of the 'new drama', 'new theatres' and 'new actresses'. Opportunities for women, outside those of actress or star-actress-manager, increased, as actresses were no longer tied to commercial theatre, which had one good part for an actor, or one good part for an actress, depending upon whether Irving had requested the play or Bernhardt. Greater equality in the distribution of roles, increased the number of 'good parts' in a production, as well as varying the representation of women. Furthermore, a company such as Manchester's Gaiety, permitted women to have their work performed, without the usual barriers of gender prejudice.

In turn, the 'new theatres' gave rise to women forming their own groups and invading the exclusively, male domains of theatre, such as the role of director, as in the case of the Women's Theatre Company or Edy Craig and her Pioneer Players. The point where this study closes, is the point where women have begun to change things for themselves, notably in England, where the background of the suffrage movement brought art and politics together in a call for emancipation. World War One brought all this to a halt in 1914, but it was a pattern which would emerge once more in the late '60's, as feminism and theatre gave rise to a new generation

of women's groups and theatre was again a platform of protest and forum for voicing women's rights.

Yet, the legacy left by women in the nineteenth-century theatre; their contribution to the progressive change in images of women in society, deserves greater recognition than it has so far received. It is hoped that this study, as a process of re-evaluation and rediscovery of the representation of women in the theatre of the period, has helped to rectify that omission. For it has demonstrated not only the scope and variety of theatre, from two, interacting, national cultures, as a medium for projecting images of women, but more importantly, the work of the women who participated in the creation and realization of the images, to challenge the myth of the doll's house.

Bibliography

The bibliography is divided according to the sections of the study to facilitate the location of references to specific subject areas. It lists works referred to in the text and notes, and those which have significantly informed the reading, though this is by no means exhaustive. Where a work is referred to in more than one section, it is listed under the section in which it first appears. Newspaper and manuscript sources and collections are listed at the end of the bibliography.

Introduction

- Alexis, Paul, La fin de Lucie Pellegrin, short story (Paris : Charpentier, 1880)
- · La fin de Lucie Pellegrin, play (Paris : Charpentier, 1888)
- Anon., 'Would You be an Actress?', Strand Magazine, 24 (September 1902), 249-256
- Baker, Michael, The Rise of the Victorian Actor (London : Croom Helm, 1978)
- Barish, Jonas, The Antitheatrical Prejudice (Berkeley, Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1981)
- Black, William, In Silk Attire, seventh edition (London : Sampson Low, 1879)
- Campbell, Mrs Patrick, My Life and Some Letters (London : Hutchinson, 1922)
- Dyer, Richard, Stars (London : British Film Institute, 1979)
- Elam, Keir, The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama (London : Methuen, 1980)
- Eliot, George (1876), Daniel Deronda (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1967)
- Feuillet, Octave, Rédemption, : Théâtre complet, 5 vols (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1897-8), II
- Fournier, Paul, Une grande artiste (Paris : Ollendorff, 1891)
- Gissing, George (1886), Isabel Clarendon, 2 vols (Brighton : Harvester Press, 1969)
- Goncourt, Edmond, La Faustin (Paris : Alphonse Lemerre, 1887)
- Gull, C.A.E. Ranger, Back to Lilac Land (London : Greening & Co., 1901)
- Houssaye, Arsène, La comédienne (Paris : Dentu, 1884)
- Jewsbury, Geraldine Endsor, The Half Sisters, 2 vols (London : Chapman & Hall, 1848)
- Kent, Christopher, 'Image and Reality : The Actress and Society', A Widening Sphere, ed. by Martha Vicinius (London : Methuen, 1980)
- Kowzan, Tadeusz, Littérature et spectacle (Paris : Mouton, 1975)
- Lemonnier, Alphonse, Les femmes de théâtre (Paris : Achille Faure, 1865)
- Pinero, A.W., Letty (London : Heinemann, 1904)
- Pinero, A.W., The 'Mind the Paint' Girl (London : Heinemann, London ,1912)
- Scribe Eugène and Ernest Legouvé, Adrienne Lecouvreur, ed. by Theodore Ely Hamilton (New York, 1917)

- Shaw, G.B., Our Theatre in the Nineties, Standard Edition, 3 vols (London : Constable, 1932 : reissued, 1948)
- Thompson, Vance, 'Beauty on the Stage' Cosmopolitan, 30, no. 3 (January 1901), 238-247
- Turner, Reginald Cynthia's Damages (London : Greening, 1901)
- Wheeler, A.C., 'Actresses Who Have Become Peeresses', Cosmopolitan, 20, no.2 (December 1895), 130-137
- Zola Emile (1879), Nana (Paris : Livre de Poche, 1965)

Section One

- Adam, Paul and Gabriel Mourey, L'automne (Paris : E. Kolb, 1893)
- Antoine, André, Mes souvenirs sur le Théâtre Antoine et sur l'Odéon : première direction (Paris : Bernard Grasset, 1928)
- . Le théâtre (Paris : Editions de France, 1932)
- Archer, William, Masks or Faces? (London and New York : Longmans and Green, 1888)
- . Theatrical World for 1893 (London : Walter Scott, 1894)
- Augier, Emile, L'aventurière : Théâtre complet (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1889-1895), I
- . Le Mariage d'Olympe : Théâtre complet, III
- Aurevilly, Barbey de, Théâtre contemporain : 1881-1883, dernière série (Paris : Stock, 1896)
- Barrière, Théodore, and Lambert Thiboust, Les filles de marbre (Paris : M. Lèvy, 1853)
- Barthes, Roland, 'The Lady of the Camellias', Mythologies, translated by Annette Lavers (London : Granada, 1973)
- Beerbohm, Max, Around Theatres (London : Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953)
- . More Theatres (London : Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969)
- . Last Theatres (London : Rupert Hart-Davis, 1970)
- Bernhardt, Sarah, L'art du théâtre (Paris : Nilsson, 1923)
- . Ma double vie, two vols (Paris : Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1923)
- Braun, Sidney, D., The 'Courtisane' in the French Theatre from Hugo to Becque : 1831-1885 (Baltimore, Maryland : John Hopkins Press, 1947)
- Brontë, Charlotte (1853), Villette (London : Heron, 1968)
- Carlson, Marvin, The French Stage in the Nineteenth Century (Metuchen, N.J. : The Scarecrow Press, 1972)
- . The Italian Stage (London : McFarland and Jefferson, 1981)
- Case, Jules, 'La courtisane', La Nouvelle Revue, 102 (1896), 869 - 873

- Cluysenaar, Anne, Introduction to Literary Stylistics (London : B.T. Batsford, 1976)
- Collins, Wilkie, The New Magdalen (London, 1873)
- Cook, Dutton, Nights at the Play (London : Chatto and Windus, 1883)
- Coppée, François, L'abandonnée : Théâtre de, 3 vols (Paris : A. Lemerre, 1872-1882), I
- Darzens, Rodophe, L'amante du Christ (Paris : A. Lemerre, 1888)
- Daudet, Alphonse, Sapho : Théâtre, 3 vols (Paris : Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1880-1899), III
- Daudet, Ernest, Un drame parisien (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1892)
- Disher, Willson M., Melodrama (London : Rockliff, 1954)
- Dumas fils, La dame aux camélias, ed. by R.J.B. Clark (London : Oxford University Press, 1972)
- . Le demi-monde : Théâtre complet, 7 vols (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1885-90), II
- . Les idées de Mme Aubray : Théâtre complet, IV
- . Denise : Théâtre complet, VII
- Elsom, John, Erotic Theatre (London : Secker and Warburg, London, 1973)
- Feuillet, Octave, Le sphinx : Théâtre complet, 5 vols (Paris : Calmann Lévy and Emile Colin, 1897-8), IV
- Flat, Paul, Figures du théâtre contemporain, deuxième série, 2 vols (Paris : F. Sansot 1911-13)
- Foussier, Edouard and Charles Edmond, La baronne (Paris : A. Lemerre, 1871)
- Gautier, Théophile (1838), 'Une nuit de Cléopâtre' : Oeuvres de Théophile Gautier : nouvelles (Paris : A. Lemerre, 1897)
- . Historie de l'art dramatique en France, depuis vingt-cinq ans, 6 vols (Geneva : Slatkine Reprints, 1968)
- Gielgud, Kate Terry, A Victorian Playgoer (London : Heinemann, 1980)
- Grein, J.T., Dramatic Criticism : 1900-1 (London; Greening, 1902)
- . Dramatic Criticism 1902-3 (London : Eveleigh Nash, 1904)
- . Dramatic Criticism : 1903-4 (New York : Benjamin Blom, 1971)
- Hays, Michael, The Public and Performance (Michigan : UMI Research Press, 1981)
- Heron, Matilda, Medea (New York : Samuel French, 1857)
- Houssaye, Arsène, Mlle Trente-Six Vertus (Paris : E. Dentu, 1873)
- Joannidès, A. La comédie Française de 1680 à 1900 (New York : Burt Franklin, 1971)
- Jones, Henry Arthur, Mrs Dane's Defence : Representative Plays : 3 (London : Macmillan, 1926)
- Knelpler, Henry, The Gilded Stage (London : Constable, 1968)

- Legouv , Ernest, Med e : Th  tre complet: pi ces en vers (Paris : Didier, 1873)
- Leli vre, Ren e, Le th  tre dramatique italien en France : 1855-1940 (Paris : A. Colin, 1959)
- Lema tre, Jules, Impressions de th  tre, 10 vols (Paris : Nouvelle Biblioth  que Litt raire, 1888-1898), X
- Mend s, Catulle, M d e (Paris : Charpentier, 1898)
- Mikhail, E.H., 'The French Influences on Oscar Wilde's Comedies', Revue de Litt rature compar e, 42 (1968), 220-233
- Morley, Henry, The Journal of a London Playgoer (Leicester : Leicester University Press, 1974)
- Pailleron, Edouard, Les faux m nages (Paris : Calmann L vy, 1882)
- Pemberton, T. Edgar, The Life and Writings of T.W. Robertson (London : Richard Bentley, 1892)
- Peters, Margot, Bernard Shaw and the Actresses (New York : Doubleday, 1980)
- Pinero, A.W., The profligate (London : Heinemann, 1891)
- _____ . The Second Mrs Tanqueray (New York, London : Samuel French, 1964)
- _____ . The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith (London : Heinemann, 1895)
- _____ . Iris (London : Heinemann, 1902)
- _____ . Mid-Channel (London : Heinemann, 1910)
- Praz, Mario, The Romantic Agony, translated by Angus Davidson, second edition (London : Oxford University Press, 1970)
- Rame, Franca, and Dario Fo, Medea : Female Parts : One Woman Plays (London : Pluto Press, 1981)
- Richardson, Joanna, The Courtesans (London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967)
- Ristori, Adelaide, Studies and Memoirs (London : W.H. Allen, 1888)
- Roberts, Marguerite, ed., Tess in the Theatre (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1950)
- Robertson, T.W., Home : The Principal Dramatic Works, Vol I (London : Samuel French and Sampson Low, 1889)
- Robins, Elizabeth, Votes for Women (London : Mills and Boon, 1909)
- Rowell, George, ed., Victorian Dramatic Criticism (London : Methuen, 1971)
- _____ . The Victorian Theatre : 1792 - 1914 : A Survey, second edition (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1978)
- _____ . 'Sardou on the English Stage', Theatre Research International, 2, no.1 (1976), 33-44

- Salmon, Eric, ed., Bernhardt and the Theatre of Her Time (London : Greenwood, 1977)
- Sarcey, Francisque, Quarante ans de théâtre, 8 vols (Paris : Bibliothèque des Annales, 1900-1902)
- Sardou, Victorien, Cléopâtre : Théâtre complet, 15 vols (Paris : Albin Michel, 1934-1961), IV
- _____. Odette : Théâtre complet, VI
- Schwarz, Stanley H., 'The Influence of Dumas ~~fr~~ on Oscar Wilde', French Review, 7, no.1 (November 1933), 5-25
- Simon, Elliott M., The Problem Play in British Drama : 1890 - 1914, in series, Poetic Drama and Poetic Theory, ed. Dr James Hogg (Salzburg, Austria : Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1978)
- Soumet, Alexandre, Cléopâtre (Paris : Tresse, 1846)
- Southern, Richard, The Victorian Theatre : A Pictorial Survey (Newton Abbot : David and Charles, 1970)
- Stanton, Stephen S., ed., Camille and Other Plays (New York : Hill and Wang, 1957)
- Stokes, John, 'The Legend of Duse', Decadence and the 1890's : Stratford Upon Avon Studies, 17, ed. by Ian Fletcher (London : Edward Arnold, 1979)
- _____. 'A Kind of Beauty : Réjane in London', Themes in Drama, 6, ed. by James Redmond (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1984), 97-119
- Symons, Arthur (1927) Eleonora Duse (London, New York : Benjamin Blom, 1969)
- Taranow, Gerda, Sarah Bernhardt : The Art Within the Legend (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1972)
- Ternant, Andrew, 'The Courtesan on the French Stage', Westminster Review, 154 (1900), 671-684
- Turia, Carmen, and Miss Lily Elsie, 'The Art of Gesture', Strand Magazine, 40 (December 1910), 723-728
- Ward, Geneviève and Richard Whiteing, Both Sides of the Curtain (London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Cassell, 1918)
- Wearing, J.P., The Collected Letters of Sir Arthur Wing Pinero (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota, 1974)
- Weiss, J.J., Le théâtre et les mœurs (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1889)
- Wilde, Oscar, A Woman of No Importance, twelfth edition (London : Methuen, 1925)
- Winter, William, Shakespeare on the Stage, third series (London and New York : Benjamin Blom, 1916; reissued, 1969)

Section Two

- Ackroyd, Peter, Dressing Up (London : Thames and Hudson, 1979)
- Agate, James, Buzz Buzz! : Essays of the Theatre (London : Collins, 1918)

- . James Agate : An Anthology, ed. by Herbert Van Thal (London : Rupert Hart Davis, 1961)
- Agate, May, Madame Sarah (London : Home and Van Thal, 1945)
- Anon., 'Bernhardt as Hamlet', T.P.'s Weekly, 3 (April 1904), 482.
- Appleton, William W., Madame Vestris and the London Stage (New York, London, Columbia Univeristy Press, 1974)
- Bailey, Peter, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978)
- Baker, Roger, Drag (London : Triton, 1968)
- Balzac, Honoré (1835), Séraphita : La comédie humaine, 10 (Paris : Gallimard, 1950)
- Barbin, Herculine, Herculine Barbin, introduced by Michael Foucault and translated by R. McDougall (New York : Pantheon, 1980)
- Baring, Maurice, Sarah Bernhardt (London : Thomas Nelson, 1938)
- Barrie, J.M., Peter Pan, in, The Plays of J.M. Barrie, ed. by A.E. Wilson, second edition (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1942)
- Barthes, Roland, S/Z (Paris : Editions Seuil, 1970)
- Bax, Clifford, Pretty Witty Nell (London : Chapman and Hall, 1932)
- Bernhardt, Sarah, 'Men's Roles as Played by Women', Harper's Bazar, 33 (15 December 1900), 2113-2115
- Booth, Michael R., ed., English Plays of the Nineteenth Century, volume V, Pantomimes Extravaganzas and Burlesques (Oxford : Claredon Press, 1976)
- Brandreth, Gyles, I Scream for Ice Cream (London : Methuen, 1974)
- Cheshire, David, Music Hall In Britain (Newton Abbot, Devon : David and Charles, 1974)
- . 'Male Impersonators', Saturday Book, 29 (London : Hutchinson, 1969), 245-252
- Coppée, François, Le passant : Théâtre de, 3 vols (Paris : Lemerre, 1872-1882), I
- Cunningham, Peter (1851), The Story of Nell Gwyn and the Sayings of Charles II, edited by Henry B. Wheatley (London : Gibbings, 1903)
- Davison, Peter, Songs of the British Music Hall (New York : Oak Publications, 1971)
- Disher, Willson M., Winkles and Champagne (London : B.T. Batsford, 1938)
- Emboden, William Sarah Bernhardt (London : Studio Vista, Macmillan, 1974)
- Fagan, Elizabeth, ed., From the Wings, (London : Collins, 1922)
- Faucit, Helena (Lady Martin), On Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters (London, Edinburgh : Blackwood, 1885)
- Felstead, Theodore S., Stars Who Made the Halls (London : T. Werner Laurie, 1946)
- Findlater, Richard, The Player Queens (London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976)

- Fletcher, Ian, ed., Romantic Mythologies (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967)
- Frye, Northrop, The Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1957)
- Gammond, Peter, The Good Old Days Song Book (London : BBC/EMI, 1980)
- Garrett, John M., Sixty Years of British Music Hall (London : Chappell, 1976)
- Gautier, Théophile (1835), Mademoiselle de Maupin (Paris : Garnier, 1955)
- Gilbert, O.P., Women in Men's Guise, translated by J. Lewis May (London : John Lane, Bodley Head, 1932)
- Gilder, Rosamund, Enter the Actress (London : Harrap, 1931)
- Glasstone, Victor, Victorian and Edwardian Theatres (London : Thames and Hudson, 1975)
- Godfrey, Sima, 'The Dandy as Ironic Figure', Sub-Stance, 36 (1982), 21-33
- Grein, J.T., Premières of the Year (London : Macqueen, 1900)
- Haddon, Archibald, The Story of the Music Hall (London : Fleetway Press, 1935)
- Hansen, John, 'Bernhardt as Hamlet', National Magazine (August 1899), 469 - 472
- Hiatt, Charles, Ellen Terry (London : George Bell, 1898)
- Holledge, Julie, Innocent Flowers (London : Virago, 1981)
- Houssaye, Arsène, Behind the Scenes of the Comédie Française, translated by Albert Vandam (London : Chapman and Hall, 1889)
- Hynes, Samuel, The Edwardian Turn of Mind (Princeton N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1971)
- Jackson, Rosemary, Fantasy (London, New York : Methuen, 1981)
- Kettle, Michael, Salome's Last Veil (London, New York : Hart-Davis and MacGibbon, 1977)
- Killham, John, Tennyson and 'The Princess' (London : University of London, Athlone Press, 1958)
- Kuhn, Annette, The Power of the Image (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985)
- Leslie, Peter, A Hard Act to Follow (London, New York : Paddington Press, 1978)
- Liechti, Robert, 'Male Impersonation on the Stage' Callboy (December 1968), 16-19
- Lucey, Janet Camden, Lovely Peggy (London : Hurst and Blackett, 1952)
- Macinnes, Colin, Sweet Saturday Night (London : MacGibbon and Kee, 1967)
- MacQueen Pope, W., The Melodies Linger On (London : W.H. Allen, 1950)
- Maeterlinck, Maurice, Pelléas et Mélisande : Théâtre, II (Brussels : Lacomblez, 1908)
- Maitland, Sara, Vesta Tilley (London : Virago, 1986)
- Mander, R., and J. Mitchenson, Hamlet Through the Ages (London Rockliff, 1952)
- _____. Pantomime : A Story in Pictures (London : Peter Davies, 1973)

- _____. Victorian and Edwardian Entertainment (London : B.T. Batsford, 1978)
- Mayer, David, Harlequin in his Element (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 1969)
- _____. 'The sexuality of Pantomime', Theatre Quarterly, 4, no. 13 (February - April 1974), 55-64
- Maynwaring, Arthur, Memoirs of the Celebrated Mrs Woffington, second edition (London 1760)
- Moers, Ellen, The Dandy : Brummel to Beerbohm (London Secker and Warburg, 1960)
- Newton, H. Chance (1928), Idols of the 'Halls' (London : EP Publishing and British Book centre, 1975)
- _____. Cues and Curtain Calls (London : John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1927)
- Nicholson, Watson (1906), The Struggle for a Free Stage in London (New York : Benjamin Blom, 1966)
- Pearl, Cyril, The Girl with the Swansdown Seat (London : Frederick Muller, 1955)
- Peladan, Joséphin, L'androgynie (Paris : Dentu, 1891)
- Pennell, E.R., 'The Pedigree of the Music Hall', Contemporary Review, 63 (April 1893), 575-583
- Peters, Margot, Mrs Pat (London : Bodley Head, 1984)
- Pinero, A.W., The Amazons (London : Heinemann, 1895)
- Pronier, Ernest, Sarah Bernhardt (Geneva : Alex. Jullien, n.d.)
- Raymond, Janice G., The Transsexual Empire (London : Women's Press, 1980)
- Richardson, Joanna, Sarah Bernhardt and Her World (London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977)
- Robins, Elizabeth, 'On seeing Madame Bernhardt's Hamlet', North American Review, 171 (December 1900), 908-919
- Rose, Clarkson, Red Plush and Greasepaint (London : Museum Press, 1964)
- Rostand, Edmond, L'Aiglon (Paris : Fasquelle, 1963)
- Roy, George Le, Music Hall Stars of the Nineties (London : British Technical and General Press, 1952)
- Rueff, Suze, I Knew Sarah Bernhardt (London : Frederick Muller, 1951)
- Sand, George, Comme il vous plaira (Paris : Librairie Nouvelle, 1856)
- Scott, Clement, Some Notable Hamlets (New York, London : Benjamin Blom, 1900; reissued, 1969)
- Senelick, Laurence, 'The Evolution of the Male Impersonator on the Nineteenth Century Popular Stage', Essays in Theatre, 1, no. 1 (November 1982), 30-44
- Shakespeare, William, As You Like It, Arden edition (London, New York, Methuen, 1975)
- Shewan, Rodney, Oscar Wilde : Art and Egotism (London : Macmillan, 1977)

- Steedman, Jane, W., 'From Dame to Woman' : W.S. Gilbert and Theatrical Transvestism', Victorian Studies, 14, no.1 (September 1970), 27-46
- Stokes, John, Resistible Theatres (London : Paul Elek, 1972)
- Sudworth, Gwynedd, The Great Little Tilley (Luton : Cortney Publications, 1984)
- Terriss, Ellaline, Just a Little Bit of String (London : Hutchinson, 1955)
- Tilley, Vesta, Recollections of Vesta Tilley (London : Hutchinson, 1934)
- Walkley, A.B. Drama and Life (London : Methuen, 1907)
- . 'The Triumph of the Variety Entertainment', New Review, 7 (October 1892), 505 -512
- Whyte, Frederic, Actors of the Century (London : George Bell, 1898)
- Wilson, A.E. Pantomime Pageant (London : Stanley Paul, 1946)
- . Pantomime : The Silent Theatre (New York : Atheneum, 1964)
- Wilson, John Harold, Nell Gwyn (London : Frederick Muller, 1952)
- Winter, William, Shakespeare on the Stage, second series (New York, London : Benjamin Blom, 1915; reissued, 1969)
- Worth, Katherine, Materlinck's Plays in Performance (Cambridge : Chadwyck-Healey, 1985)

Section Three

- Ajalbert, Jean, La fille Elisa (Paris : Charpentier and Éasquelle, 1891)
- Alexis, Paul and Giuseppe Giacosa, La provinciale (Paris : Calmann Lévy, 1894)
- Anon., Alan's Wife (London : Henry, 1893)
- Antoine, André, "Mes souvenirs" sur Le Théâtre Libre (Paris : Arthème Fayard, 1921)
- Ashwell, Lena, Myself a Player (London : Michael Joseph, 1936)
- Aston, Elaine, 'Feminism in the French Theatre : A Turn-of-the- Century Perspective' New Theatre Quarterly, Vol II, no.7 (August 1986), 237-242
- Aurevilly, Barbey d', Le théâtre contemporain 1869-70 (Paris : Stock, 1909)
- Baker, Elizabeth, Chains : Plays of To-day, vol 1 (London : Sidgwick and Jackson, 1925)
- . Miss Tassey : Representative One-Act Plays by British and Irish Authors, ed. by Barrett H. Clark (Boston: Little and Brown, 1921)
- Barrie, J.M., The Twelve Pound Look : The Definitive Edition of the Plays of J.M. Barrie, ed. By A.E. Wilson (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1942)
- Bataille, Henry, Maman Colibri : Comédie (Paris, Arthème Fayard, n.d.)
- Bennett , P.R., Mary Edwards : Sketches from the Actresses' Franchise League, ed. by Viv Gardner, Twentieth Century Nottingham Drama Texts (Nottingham, 1985)
- Bernstein, Henry, Le bercail (Paris : Charpentier, 1912)

- Bertault, Jules, Paris 1870-1935, translated by R. Millar (London : Eyre and Spottiswode, 1936)
- Bissell, Clifford H., Les conventions du théâtre bourgeois contemporain en France 1887-1914 (Paris : Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1930)
- Bisson, Alexandre, and Antony Mars, Le surprises du divorce (Paris : Calman Lévy, 1895)
- Bras, Hervé Le and Emmanuel Todd, L'invention de la France (Paris : Collection Pluriel Le Livre de Poche, Librairie Générale Française, 1981)
- Brieux, Eugène, Les avariés (Paris : Stock, 1902)
- . Le berceau (Paris : Stock, 1902)
- . Blanchette (Paris : Stock, 1897)
- . La femme seule (Paris : Stock, 1913)
- . Maternité, second edition (Paris : Stock, 1904)
- . Maternité, second version, Théâtre complet , Vol IV (Paris : Stock, 1922)
- . Les remplaçantes, Théâtre complet, Vol IV (Paris : Stock, 1922)
- . Suzette (Paris : Stock, 1910)
- . Les trois filles de M. Dupont (Paris : Stock, 1900)
- . Three Plays by Brieux : Maternity, The Three Daughters of M. Dupont, Damaged Goods, Maternity (new version), third edition (London : A.C. Fifield, 1914)
- . Three Plays by Brieux : Woman on Her Own, The Red Robe, False Gods (London : Herbert Jenkins, 1916)
- Brieux, Eugène and Jean Sigaux, La déserteuse, L'illustration, supplément au no. 3217 (22 October, 1904)
- Brighouse, Harold, Lonesome Like : Representative One-Act Plays by British and Irish Authors, ed. by Barrett H. Clark (Boston : Little and Brown, 1921)
- Capus, Alfred, Rosine (Paris : Ollendorff, 1898)
- Case, Jules, La vassale (Paris : Ollendorff, 1897)
- Chloros, A.G., ed., The Reform of Family Law in Europe (Deventer, Holland, Boston, London, Frankfurt, 1978)
- Cima, Gay Gibson, 'Discovering Signs : The Emergence of the Critical Actor in Ibsen', Theatre Journal (March 1983), 5-22
- Cocteau, Jean (1935), Portraits souvenir : 1900-1914 (Paris : Bernard Grasset, reissued, 1977)
- Cominos, P., 'Late Victorian Respectability and the Social System' International Review of Social History, 8 (1963), 18-43, 216-250.
- Copeau, Jacques, Critiques d'un autre temps, fifth edition (Paris : Nouvelle Revue Paris, 1923)

- Daireaux, Max, Villiers de l'Isle Adam (Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1936)
- Dalloz, Jurisprudence Générale, part 4, 'Divorce' (Paris : 1884)
- Donnay, Maurice, La douloureuse : Théâtre complet, 5 vols (Paris : Charpentier and Fasquelle, 1908-12), II
- . Le torrent : Théâtre complet, III
- . L'autre danger : Théâtre complet, IV
- Doumic, René, 'French Drama in 1901', Fortnightly Review, 77 (January-June, 1902), 170-180
- Dubeux, Albert, Julia Bartet (Paris : Librairie Plon, 1938)
- Ervine, St. John, Jane Clegg : Plays of To-day, Vol I (London : Sidgwick and Jackson, 1925)
- Ferval, Claude, Paul Hervieu (Paris : Arthème Fayard, 1916)
- Filon, Augustin (1897), The English Stage, translated by Frederic Whyte (reissued, London and New York : Kennikat Press, 1970)
- Gad, Emma, Préludes, translated by le vicomte de Colleville and Fritz de Zepelin, Revue d'Art dramatique (May 1897), 492-506, and (June 1897), 584-597
- Galsworthy, John, The Fugitive : Plays Third Series (London : Duckworth, 1914)
- Granges, Charles-Marc de, 'La femme française d'après la comédie contemporaine', Le Correspondant, 214 (1904), 63-94
- Granville, Barker H., Waste : Three Plays (London : Sidgwick and Jackson, n.d.)
- Heaton, J. Henniker, 'The Chaos of Marriage and Divorce Laws', New Review, no.62 (July 1894), 157-175
- Hermant, Abel, L'empreinte (Paris : Ollendorff, 1900)
- Hervieu, Paul, Oeuvres de théâtre, 4 vols (Paris : Alphonse Lemerre, 1909)
- Hobson, Harold, French Theatre Since 1830 (London : John Calder, 1978)
- Houghton, Stanley, Hindle Wakes : Plays of To-day, Vol I (London : Sidgwick and Jackson, 1925)
- . Independent Means : The Works of Stanley Houghton, 3 vols (London : Constable, 1914), I
- Huneker, James, Iconoclasts (London : T. Werner Laurie [1906])
- Imprimerie Nationale, Compte générale de l'administration de la justice civile et commerciale, pendant l'année 1901 : France, Algérie, Tunisie (Paris [1901])
- Juglart, Michel de, Leçons de droit civil, part I, vol III (Paris : Montchrestien, 1972)
- Kahn, Armand, Le théâtre social en France de 1870 à nos jours (Lucerne : Fatio, 1907)
- Kennedy, Dennis, Granville Barker and the Dream of a Theatre (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1985)

- Keyssar, Helene, Feminist Theatre (London, Basingstoke : Macmillan, 1984)
- Knight, Patricia, 'Women and Abortion in Victorian and Edwardian England', History Workshop, 4 (Autumn 1977), 57-69
- Lacour, Léopold, 'La femme dans le théâtre du XIX siècle', La Revue d'Art dramatique, 16 (October ,1901), 662-667
- Lemaître, Jules, Impressions de théâtre 10 vols (Paris : Nouvelle Bibliothèque Litteraire, 1888-1898), IX
- Lowndes, Marie A.B., 'The Théâtre Libre of Paris', New Review, 10 (February 1894), 205-214
- Lundeberg, Olav K., 'Ibsen in France', Scandinavian Studies and Notes, 8 (1924-5), 93-107
- Lyttelton, Edith, Warp and Woof (London : T. Fisher and Unwin, 1908)
- MacCarthy, Desmond, The Court Theatre 1904-07 (London : A.H. Bullen, 1907)
- McDonald, Jan, The 'New Drama' 1900-1914 (London, Basingstoke; Macmillan, 1986)
- . 'New Actors for the New Drama', Themes in Drama 6 (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1984), 121-139
- McEvoy, Charles, The Three Barrows (London : Ernest Benn, 1924)
- McLaren, Angus, 'Women's Work and Regulation of Family Size : The Question of Abortion in the Nineteenth Century', History Workshop, 4 (Autumn 1977), 70-81
- . 'Doctor in the House : Medicine and Private Morality in France, 1800-1850', Feminist Studies, 2 (2/3) (1974-5), 39-54
- . 'Abortion in France : Women and the Regulation of Family Size 1800-1914', French Historical Studies, 10, no.3 (Spring 1978), 461-485
- Magraw, Roger, France 1815-1914 : The Bourgeois Century (Oxford : Fontana, 1983)
- Mander, R., and J. Mitchenson, Theatrical Companion to Shaw (London : Rockliff, 1954)
- Marcus, Jane, ed., The Young Rebecca (London : Macmillan / Virago, 1982)
- Marcus, S., The Other Victorians (London, New York : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966)
- Margueritte, Paul, and Victor Margueritte, L'autre (Paris, 1908)
- Marks, Elaine, and Isabelle de Courtivron, editors, New French Feminisms (Brighton : Harvester press, 1981)
- Marty, Gabriel and Pierre Raynaud, Droit civil : Les personnes, second edition, part I Vol II (Paris : Sirey, 1967)
- Maurceley, Baude de Charles, Après le divorce (Paris : Tresse and Stock, 1889)
- Meisel, Martin, Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theater (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1963)
- Monkhouse, Allan, Mary Broome : Plays of To-day, Vol II (London : Sidgwick and Jackson, 1925)
- . Reaping the Whirlwind : Four Tragedies (London : Duckworth, 1913)

- Murray, Janet Horowitz, ed., Strong-Minded Women (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1984)
- Nevinson, Margaret Wynne, In the Workhouse (London : International Suffrage Shop, 1911)
- Nevinson, Margaret Wynne, Workhouse Characters (London : George Allen and Unwin, 1918)
- Paston, George, Clothes and the Woman (London, New York : Samuel French, 1922)
- Payne, Ben Iden, A Life in a Wooden O (Newhaven and London : Yale University Press, 1977)
- Pellizzi, Camillo, English Drama : The Last Great Phase, translated by Rowan Williams (London : Macmillan, 1935)
- Poe, Lugné Acrobaties : La parade (Paris : Gallimard, 1931)
- Pogson, Rex, Miss Horniman and the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester (London : Rockliff, 1952)
- Porto-Riche, Georges de, Amoureuse : Théâtre d'amour (Paris : Ollendorff, n.d.)
- Pruner, Francis, Les luttes d'Antoine au Théâtre Libre, Vol I (Paris : Bibliothèque des Lettres Modernes, 1964)
- Raitt, A.W., The Life of Villiers de l'Isle Adam (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1981)
- Renard, Jules, Théâtre complet (Paris : Gallimard, 1959)
- Riemer, Eleanor S., and John C. Fout, editors, European Women : A documentary History, 1789-1945 (Brighton : Harvester Press, 1983)
- Robins, Elizabeth, 'Ibsen and the Actress', Hogarth Essays, series 2, 15 (1928), 5-56
- Robins, Gertrude, Makeshifts : One-Act Plays by British and Irish Authors, ed. by Barrett H. Clark (Boston : Little and Brown, 1921)
- Royden, Maude A., ed., Downward Paths (London : Bell, 1916)
- Sardou, Victorien and E. de Najac, Divorçons : Théâtre complet, 15 vols (Paris : Albin Michel, 1934-1961), XI
- Shaw, Bernard, Plays Unpleasant (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1946)
- . Press Cuttings (London : Constable, 1924)
- Strachey, Ray, The Cause (London : Virago, 1978)
- Thalasso, Adolphe, Le Théâtre Libre (Paris : Mercure de France, 1909)
- Tolstoy, Leo, The Power of Darkness : Nineteenth Century Russian Plays, translated by F.D. Reeve (New York : W.W. Norton, 1973)
- Traversi, Camillo Antona, Réjane (Paris : Le Calame, 1930)
- Vandérem, Fernand, La victime : La petite illustration, 2, theatre series, no.24-40 (January 1914 - June 1914), 3-18
- Villiers, de l'Isle Adam, La révolte : Oeuvre complètes, Vol VII (Paris : Mercure de France, 1925)
- . La révolte, translated by Theresa Barclay, Fortnightly Review, new series, 68 (December 1897), 862-874

Waxman, Samuel, Montefiore, Antoine and the Théâtre Libre (New York : Benjamin Blom, 1904)

Weeks, Jeffrey, Sex Politics and Society : The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800 (London, New York, 1981)

Williams, A.R., The Street : Three New Plays (London : T. Werner Laurie, 1908)

Woodfield, James, English Theatre in Transition 1881-1914 (London, Sydney : Croom Helm, 1984)

Young, Charles Edmund, The Marriage Question in the Modern French Drama, 1850-1911 (Madison, Wisconsin : University of Wisconsin, 1915)

Zeldin, Theodore, France 1848-1945, Vol I (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1973)

Primary Theatre Journal and Newspaper Sources

(i) English Sources

Daily Chronicle

Daily Dispatch (Manchester) *

Daily Telegraph

Era

Manchester Guardian *

Pall Mall Gazette

Speaker

Star

Theatre

The Times

Westminster Gazette

(* Primary source for chapter 11 only)

(ii) French Sources

Le Figaro

Le Gaulois

L'Humanité

La Presse

La Revue d'Art dramatique

Le Temps

Le Théâtre

Secondary Theatre Journal and Newspaper Sources

The following English and French papers were also used for minimal consultation of review material :-

L'Art dramatique et musical; Black and White; Le Correspondant; Le Diable; Dramatic Review; Journal des débats; Manchester Evening News; Le Nation; News of the World; Playgoer and Society Illustrated; Play Pictorial; Punch; Revue des deux mondes; Saturday Review; Spectator; Suffragette; T.P.'s Weekly .

Manuscripts and Special Collections

British Museum, Manuscripts Room : Lord Chamberlain's Collection

Melville, F., Between Two Women (Terriss, Rotherhithe, 27.10.1902)

———. . The Ugliest Woman on Earth (Terriss, Rotherhithe, 14.11.1904)

———. . The Bad Girl of the Family (Elephant and Castle, 4.10.1909; Aldwych, 27.12.1909)

Melville, W., The Worst Woman in London, (Standard, 23.10.1899)

———. . A Disgrace to Her Sex (Terriss, Rotherhithe, 23.5.1904)

———. . The Girl Who Took the Wrong Turning (Standard, 1.10.1906)

———. . The Girl Who Wrecked his Home (Standard, 30.9.1907)

Manchester Central Library : The Horniman Collection

Gaiety Theatre Annual: 1911-12

The Horniman Festival : A Scrapbook

Misc. Collection of Horniman Newsclippings and Photographs, 1907-78

Theatre Programmes and Posters from the Gaiety Years

University of Warwick : Special Collections

Edwardian Pantomime Scripts

Marandet Collection : Nineteenth Century French Drama, 1830-1900